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NAME OF GARLAND

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE WICKHAMSES
MRS. GALER'S BUSINESS
ERB
LOST PROPERTY
A BREAKER OF LAWS
A SON OF THE STATE
SECRETARY TO BAYNE, M.P.
MORD EM'LY

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# NAME OF GARLAND

BY

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TO MY FRIEND

MISS GEORGINA HOGARTH

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# NAME OF GARLAND

## CHAPTER I

"On Sunday in May and in London,
With the world on its own highway,
Oh! hearts are so light and eyes are bright
In London on Sunday in May."

CLOSING the side door of Masters's, she went across to the kerb, and from there exchanged affectionate farewells with a tearful baby at the window above the shop; the baby gave hand-signals with the aid of his mother, who could be heard trying to persuade him that Winnie had only gone out to buy something enormous in the way of presents; possibly a live lion. The short girl glanced at the clock jutting from the establishment of the watchmaker and jeweller, compared the hour recorded there with the time announced at her wrist, and started, avoiding a house-painter's ladder with great particularity.

Only the tobacconist's and the newspaper-shop in Fortess Road were open; she allowed herself a brief moment to glance at the placards, and to note the disasters always so generously furnished by a Saturday for the Sunday journals. Engaged in the task of



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fastening white cotton gloves, she could nevertheless perceive that eyes watched from first-floors across the way; she guessed that on the side where she walked heads leaned out perilously over window-boxes of geraniums and above large lettered inscriptions. The driver of a car, seeing her, lifted his stump of a whip, and prepared to put on the brake; Winnie shook her head, and going out into the middle of the roadway, swung easily to the ledge, and went up the steps. She gave a glance of terrified apprehension at a man with a tweed cap on the front seat; another look reassured her.

"Only got to raise your sunshade or call out 'Hi,'" grumbled the conductor, in taking her fare, "and we could have pulled up. That's the way accidents happen. Accidents happen that way, and before you know where you are you're in the Great Northern 'Ospital and your life despaired of. Any more fares, please?"

He returned from the front of the car, after a challenge to passengers.

"Your life despaired of," he went on to the girl with gloomy relish. "Screen round the bed; all your friends and relatives sent for, and a long report in the newspapers 'eaded 'Gross Carelessness of a Tram-Conductor.' Coroner talks to me like a Dutch uncle; I lose my temper, and answer him back; Company suspends me and finally turns me off; I go from bad to worse; wife and children starving at 'ome, and all this simply because——"

"Kennel!" she said quietly. He growled his way down the steps.

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Winnie placed her purse upon her lap and finished the work of buttoning gloves. A young woman seated next to her, the principal features of whose face were two ripe apples, picked the purse from the floor and returned it. Winnie thanked her, and the two plunged at once, speaking in tones of extraordinary refinement, into the question of pockets and the new style of costumes, and disastrous experiences of the past in this connection. The apple-faced young woman had once lost a purse containing sevenpence and the return half of a ticket from Hornsey; fortunately she happened to be with her young gentleman at the time and it mattered little, but the imagination could picture such an incident where the consequences would be, as she phrased it, most awfully awkward. Oddly enough, she was on her way now to meet the same Mr. Chapman.

"Reckon I shall be rather behindhand," she remarked proudly.

"Does them no harm to keep them waiting," said Winnie.

"Best plan I find is," said the other girl, "to stroll up casually and say, 'Not late, am I?' If they say, 'No,' well and good. If they say, 'Yes,' why it gives you your opportunity to talk to them straight."

They agreed vivaciously on the usefulness of giving now and again a sharp, direct, rapier-like thrust of speech; one that provided subject for consideration afterwards, and showed members of the other sex they were not entitled to consider themselves everybody. The round-faced girl regretted she had no cards with her; she fully intended to have some done, but kept

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putting it off and off; her name was Miss Enefer. Enefer with one n. Supposed to be a very old family with property about somewhere if they could lay hands upon it. Winnie, looking in her purse, said she appeared to have used her last; her name was Garland. Miss Winifred Garland, with one r. As the car finished its ascent and stopped at the Tavern they both cried in dismay, "Oh, do look at the time!" and with hasty farewell expressed a wish that they might encounter each other on the return journey. On the pavement it became necessary to keep up the fiction of a disappointment, and Winnie looked eagerly up Archway Road, and examined folk near the waiting yellow omnibuses at the foot of Highgate Hill, rushed to the other side of the triangle and returned. Miss Enefer, watching this elaborate performance, raised eyebrows to express a note of interrogation; Winnie gave a gesture which implied a resigned mood with a fine touch of carelessness.

She took the hill leisurely, but not with the deliberation showed by stout women in black carrying large babies; one infant saluted her with enthusiasm, and she stopped to allow him to bite her finger with harmless gums, and asking a question, assured the flattered mother that the child looked twice the age. At the Whittington Stone, half-way up, she rested for a moment to consider a wish in view of the fact that a white horse had come in sight. Two lads lifted their straw hats, and one spoke with an air of assured impudence.

"Excuse me," he said. "May I venture to introduce my friend Richard, Miss? Just on his way to the

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Mansion House, and he wants to know what you think of his prospects. If he can only find a cat he'll feel safe."

"Beg pardon?" she said.

The youth repeated the remark with less confidence.

"Would you mind saying it once more?"

He complied reluctantly.

"Can't quite catch now what you're trying to tell me. Just repeat it."

"Oh, come away, Chapman!" interposed the second youth. "Don't you know by this time that girls have got no sense of humour? Besides, that isn't humour."

Glancing over her shoulder presently, she observed that her companion of the tramcar had met them, and was shaking hands. She remarked that some girls were not over and above particular, and finished the hill in a state of good conceit of herself. In the new park, and going along at the top of the slope, Winnie gave an expression of amusement to her features on passing near affectionate couples, causing them to release arms and take up attitudes and manners of such coldness as to approach the state of violent animosity. She followed a party of four dressed in black and bearing white flowers, and entered the cemetery on their very heels, imitating the serious deportment of elders and giving a reproving shake of the head to boys who were secretly punching each other. She was near an important tombstone (stone angel blowing a trumpet with tremendous vigour), reading the inscription and biting her under-lip, as though to control deep emotion, when an elderly couple stopped to read the text. Winnie's signs of agitation increased.

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"No use taking on, my dear," said the old lady in a comforting way. "It was all mapped out, you may be sure of that. We're sent into this world and we're taken out of it, and the management's in wiser hands than ours." "That is so," corroborated the husband. "Have one of these peppermint lozenges and try to cheer up. Make light of it. Good-bye, my dear. Heaven bless you. There's many worse off, if we took the trouble to look about us. Keep up your spirits." "That's the great thing," agreed the husband.

Her appetite for tombstones satisfied, she went back into Waterlow Park, and finding a vacant corner seat, rested there, assuming an expression of deep and earnest thought that had no reference to the workings of her mind. She played with her fingers on the wooden rest, as one with musical tastes regretting the absence of a pianoforte; whenever young men went by, giving glances of considerable artfulness, she averted eyes, showing clearly to the densest and most stupid that their acquaintance was not required. One or two repeated the efforts to engage her attention, and she regretted she had not brought with her a book. *Ben Hur*, for instance, was a volume that could not at times be read, but it could always be carried.

Resting an elbow on the end of the seat, and supporting her chin by knuckles, she gazed across London and tried to identify the more prominent buildings. Several of these were churches, and bells came pleasantly from the distance; she began to consider the advisability of giving an hour to one of them. There the joining in hymns would at least

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provide a feeling of company. Or, how would it be, instead of thinking about church, to smile coyly at the next young man who came by?

"We meet again," cried the companion of the tramcar. Miss Enefer tripped across the gravelled roadway, leaving the two lads; the taller struck a pungent fusee to hide confusion. "Wondered whether I should run across you up here. Nice new park, isn't it? Everything laid out so beautifully. Capital view, too, you get from here."

"Glad you like it."

"I say!" The girl lowered her tones. "Tell what you can do if you like. Didn't meet your young gentleman, did you?"

"Didn't want!"

"Oh, don't say that," urged the other, shocked. "I always think we ought to act fairly by them. Doesn't do to give them an excuse for thinking they're hard done by. What I was going to say was this. My friend Mr. Chapman has brought a chum with him this evening for some silly reason, and seeing you looking so lonely——"

"My own company," she replied, with spirit, "is quite good enough for me."

"What I thought was, that I might introduce you, and then we could have a stroll round together. Three's such an awkward number."

"Give them my compliments and say that if they were the only two left on earth——"

"That is unkind of you," protested Miss Enefer. "I quite thought you had a pleasant disposition. 'Tisn't often I make a blunder like that when I meet anybody

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for the first time. Shows what a mistake it is to judge by appearances."

"Oh, trot them over," Winnie ordered recklessly. "I'll be as amiable as I can."

"Tell me your name once more, dear."

Mr. Chapman, introduced, expressed pleasure, and begged leave to present his friend, Mr. Arthur Lord, known to him from youth upwards, and, looked upon as a pal, very hard to beat. Occupants of the long wooden seat rose at this moment, and the youths sat at one end, the girls at the other. Anxious apparently to erase memories of their behaviour on Highgate Hill, the two young men burst into animated conversation on the details of the prospect before them, and a few minutes found them making a bet of sixpence; the disputed question being whether a certain dome away south belonged to St. Paul's Cathedral, or did not belong to St. Paul's Cathedral. The girls turned so soon as the spirit of gambling was exhibited (showing distress when the two contentious ones, going farther, offered to stake lives), and discussed with each other another subject.

"It's not what you might call an engagement," said the girl confidentially to Winnie. "In fact, at present it's scarcely even a walking-out, but it's—well, just something. You'll see presently how stand-offish I can be with him. You're in a shop, I suppose?"

"One has to do something for a living," replied Winnie.

"That's true. I don't blame you for not staying at home. Might as well be like a servant."

"Be like a servant?" Winnie echoed the words

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slowly, as one not willing to trust her ears. "I don't know what you mean by that. Be like a servant?"

Miss Enefer craved for pardon. Winnie made a frame with the ferrule of her parasol on the gravelled space, and etched deeper her initials there as she went on.

"Of course, with living in you don't get the comforts of a home, but you do get lively and refined society with the other young ladies, and the great thing is that you get your independence, so to speak. Certainly I shall have to be in by half-past nine to-night."

"That's early."

"But until then my time's my own, and I can do just exactly as I like. Whereas at home, if I went in at ten, one of the maids would open the door and the moment afterwards I should hear my people calling from the drawing-room."

"I know," said Miss Enefer sympathetically.

"How about moving on," suggested young Lord, "and having a look at the beauties of the park?"

"Can't you see us from where you're sitting?" asked Miss Enefer coquettishly.

Winnie rose abruptly from the wooden bench, and told Miss Enefer she was forgetting herself. The two girls walked in advance.

"Oh, well," urged Miss Enefer, "there's no great harm done. I don't get many chances during the week; you needn't begrudge me a laugh on Sundays. My people keep a fruit-shop in Castle Road, and I sit up in a box there all day long, taking money and giving change, and"—going off at a self-sympathetic tangent—"it isn't so bad in the summer, but in the winter you

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get almost froze. Chilblains?" She gave the short laugh of the expert. "And" fractiously "you do become so tired of the smell of oranges, and what not. What are you in, may I ask?"

"The drapery line," replied Winnie, with great distinctness.

"Forewoman?"

"Practically."

"Never met anyone yet in that business," said Miss Enefer, "who wasn't."

"You're fortunate," retorted Winnie, nettled. "You seem to have a more refined circle of acquaintances than you have any right to possess."

"Don't be unkind," pleaded Miss Enefer, with another sudden change. "When you get to know me better, you'll find out that I don't mean half what I say."

"Which half?"

Miss Enefer sighed, and turning her head, remarked to Mr. Chapman that there seemed to be a most fearful crowd about; she recommended a scheme whereby a small charge should be made at the gates, thus excluding the riff-raff. Mr. Chapman came to her in order to discuss this question, and the other youth advanced to Winnie's side. Gave a cough as preamble, and asked whether she knew this part of London well. Receiving only a nod for answer, he ventured to point out that the higher you were, the purer and rarer the air; at least, so he had read; he was not prepared to swear to the truth of the assertion, for these scientific chaps so often contradicted each other, that it puzzled one to know what to believe. All he could say, speaking from his own personal knowledge, was that one

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came out of Euston in the evening of a May day, feeling thoroughly dog tired, dead beat, scarce able to drag one foot after the other; but by the time one had got through Oakley Square and up Camden Street, and halfway up Camden Road, why you began to fancy you were somewhere near Orkney and Shetland.

"Excuse me for interrupting," said Winnie, "but doesn't it occur to you that you owe me an apology?" They allowed the two to go first, and followed down the slope towards the lake. "You and your friend," she went on precisely, "addressed me this evening on Highgate Hill. You didn't know me; you hadn't seen me before. But just because I was alone you forced your conversation on my notice."

"I must ask you," he said earnestly, "to bear one thing in mind. It may seem a small matter, but it means a great deal to me. It was Chapman who spoke. I never breathed so much as a single sentence, excepting at the end."

"You were in his company."

"No one regretted that fact more than myself."

"You should have stopped him."

"When Chapman once starts he can't always stop himself, let alone permitting a chum to do so."

"Why didn't you leave him then and there?" she demanded.

"I stayed on for your protection."

"Thanks," she said. "You need never trouble about that. It's only one person's work to look after me, and I can manage it better than anybody."

"Chapman has to deal with accounts," he went on, with anxiety of manner, "and that explains a good

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deal. It has an effect on a man's intelligence. My work is of an entirely different description. Mine's correspondence in the Down Parcels. I'm to all intents and purposes in charge of the whole department. It's like this: supposing a package is reported not to hand, or unable to deliver, or refused to pay, I have to get it traced in, and I have to tell one of the juniors to register the matter and to see it isn't lost sight of until it's thoroughly settled. Responsible position, mind you."

"Before we go any farther with the painful history of your life," said Winnie, "we'll clear up the subject I was speaking about." The couple in front sat on the grass, and they imitated the example at a convenient distance. "I suppose it's dry," she remarked, testing with the palm of her hand. He took off his light overcoat and spread it; she accepted with the air of one used to such attentions. "If all you say is true, go over there now and tell him what you've been telling me. Go on! Do as I tell you. If my own brother Bert was here he'd make you."

He braced himself for an effort.

"Chapman!" he called.

"Now what is it?" shouted the other.

"As we went down the second half of Highgate Hill, did we or did we not, as near as possible, come to blows over a certain incident that happened there in which you were, so to speak, implicated?"

"That is so," admitted Chapman. "I bear the marks on me still of the punch you nearly gave me." He turned to his companion and tickled her neck with a sprig of grass; she sent his straw hat rolling.

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"We'll say nothing further about it," said Winnie handsomely. "Been to many theatres lately?"

He went through the plot of a piece recently seen by him at the Olympic in Wych Street, Strand, telling it with full detail, going back when he found he had omitted something pertinent to the story, and sometimes jumping up to convey a more vivid rendering of some moving scene. He clicked finger and thumb as illustrating the fact that at certain points guns were fired, and when the leading lady denounced an Italian, no better than he should have been, indeed scarcely up to the average of stage foreigners, Winnie, absorbed in the recital, found herself shrinking from the pointed forefinger; as husband and wife came together after a generous share of disaster and misadventure, and their little child cried, "Mamma, mamma, where have you been all this long time?" and the mother answered, "I have been in the dark and the shadow, my love, and have come out into the sunshine," then she had to pretend that one of these tiresome little insects, flying about recklessly all over the place, had gone into her eye. Winnie had not been to a theatre for an age, and hinted, as she re-tied the bow of a shoelace, that her family had prejudices; fortunately, she endured no restriction in regard to literature; lady friends, associated with her in the establishment, not infrequently lent to her books and magazines, and she herself subscribed to a weekly journal. In this there was, at the present time, a running tale of such absorbing interest that really on finishing the columns given in one week's number she frequently wondered how life was to be made tolerable until the next appeared; the woman at

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the newspaper-shop invariably rallied her on the impatience exhibited when distribution was slightly delayed. She gave to Arthur Lord a brief summary of the latest instalment, and expressed doubts whether the young couple could by any possibility come together; he reassured her by declaring a belief that people clever with the pen could do almost anything. On this point she happened to be able to give some information, for her own brother Bert, stationed at Shorncliffe, had not long since gained a prize of one guinea from a weekly journal by copying something from an old magazine found by him in the Soldiers' Home. Mention of her brother caused her to talk with animation of a possibility of turmoil in Egypt.

"Arthur!"

"Yes, old man."

"What do you say," demanded Chapman, "to a slight tonic? It's gone half-past six some time since."

"Not for me," interjected Winnie at once. "She can if she likes, but I shan't. I'm not a teetotaler, but——"

"But you don't drink," suggested Chapman. And roared to the skies, fanning himself afterwards with his hat.

The sun was going down beyond Hampstead Heath, and folk in the park declared that this hour constituted the best part of a summer's day. Youngsters, however, had become tired and wishful for bed, and received upbraidings for inconsistency; at five o'clock, it appeared, they had been all impatience to leave home, and now they seemed in a hurry to return; parents said helplessly there was no pleasing some children. Never of the same mind two seconds together. Chopping

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and changing; changing and chopping. The couples walked out of the gates, Chapman and Miss Enefer now close together, and Miss Enefer showing a tendency to rest her head upon her companion's shoulder; but Winnie felt glad Arthur Lord made no offer to take her arm; this might have been because a chance sentence had given to him, as subject for a lecture, the German Emperor. The German Emperor was coming over to visit the old Queen at Windsor shortly, and would probably on one day go to the City. Arthur Lord said others could, of course, do as they pleased, but he for one did not intend to make a fuss of him. Certain recent actions of the German Emperor had not met with his approval, and although Winnie pleaded that special consideration should be given to Royalty, on the grounds of the extreme difficulty of keeping at all seasons a smiling and an amiable countenance—

"I should wear my little face out if I had to do it," she declared.

—He would not budge from the position taken up. She recommended that he should change places with the German Emperor, and as they followed Chapman and Miss Enefer into a Swiss restaurant in Holloway Road, where a notice said, "Ices, 3d., 4d., and 6d.," he expressed an opinion that if this were to happen, William would find some trouble in dealing with correspondence on the North Western Railway.

"This is my show!" announced Chapman noisily. He placed his hat on the head of a plaster figure of Liberty which, in good condition excepting at the nose, held aloft a glass globe. "You're my guests, all you. I

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pay for everything this journey. Now then! What's it to be? Don't all speak at once."

"Be quiet!" ordered Miss Enefer. "You talk in ordinary conversation as though you were selling coals."

"She wants me to be always whispering soft nothings in her fairy-like ear," suggested Chapman insinuatingly to the others.

"Behave!" commanded Miss Enefer.

"For the second time of asking—now then, Miss!" to Winnie. "You're short; but I suppose you're tall enough to open your mouth."

"Chapman," said Arthur Lord, "I've got to speak to you again. You be good enough to see after your lady friend, and I'll see after mine. And kindly restrict your conversation to your side of the table, or else it'll be my painful duty to inform you that you were not born a gentleman, and that any small efforts you may have made since to become a gentleman have been wanting in success. Waiter, take my order, please!"

Winnie had dipped her spoon into the pink-coloured ice, and was blowing upon it before tasting, when two rather tall young women came through the open doors of the restaurant, cried dejectedly, "Oh, there's no room!" and were about to turn and go when the proprietor's wife slipped from her chair at the pay-desk. They permitted themselves to be induced to take seats on the other side of the gangway, and facing the mirrored wall.

"What's the matter with it?" asked the young man.

"The ice is all right," replied Winnie. "Bit cold, but otherwise perfect. Fact is," she whispered, "two friends

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of mine have just come in. Ladies in the same establishment. It would never do for them to see me."

She dropped her spoon determinedly, and succeeded in attracting the notice of the new arrivals.

"If I don't mind being seen in your company, why should you be afraid of being seen in mine?"

"It's different," she contended.

"My practice all through my life," the lad went on, with an air of considerable age, "has been from the very first not to take the least notice of other people. If this place was full, crammed full of people of my acquaintance, I should go on talking to you in the same calm, collected way that I'm talking now. That's what comes of having a clear conscience."

"It's what comes of having a swollen head."

"Take this!" he interrupted urgently. Placed a shilling on the marble table and leaned back hurriedly for his hat. "Take this and pay presently." He went swiftly and covertly to the door and vanished.

Mr. Chapman offered explanation by stating that Arthur was the rummiest card it had ever been his fortune to know; one of whom it might be said that you never knew when he might flare up. Winnie assured them that although she had spoken plainly she had said nothing which she regretted, and if young men liked to be so sensitive as to be unable to endure the receipt of a few plain words, all she could say was that she felt sorry for them. She ignored the two young women opposite when they turned again to inspect her, but calling the waiter, paid for the ices, gave him twopence for himself, and marched steadily out of the restaurant, resisting the enticements of a mirror at the side.



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"Here's your change!" she announced brusquely. "Good-night."

"I can't let you go like that," he cried, following her and dodging through the crowd.

"Taking offence all of a sudden. I'm surprised at you."

"I didn't," he declared vehemently. "I took nothing of the kind. I wasn't giving any attention to what you were saying."

"That's a pretty compliment!"

As they went down Junction Road, separated now and again by parties of boys and girls, he insisted upon being permitted to tell the truth, the whole truth, of the matter. These were the facts. Last Sunday night he had run up against someone he knew, just about where they walked now; he spoke to her, and she replied to him. He had to be in early that evening, and foolishly he promised to meet her on this Sunday night. Still more foolishly, he forgot all about the appointment until seeing her and her two married sisters enter the restaurant; in these delicate circumstances he thought it best and wisest to make himself scarce with all convenient dispatch, and he begged Winnie to tell him whether in her opinion he had not acted for the best.

"I see what it is," she remarked deliberately. "I can see it all as clear as the noonday sun. You," she said, with decision, "you are nothing more nor less than a flirt."

"Miss Garland!" he cried appealingly. She stopped herself from saying more; impossible to hide the satisfaction at being thus addressed. "I know appearances are against me. But if you give me the privilege

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of your friendship you'll be able in course of time to withdraw those words. Meet me next Sunday evening."

"Think it's likely after what you've told me?"

"It's going to happen," he declared, with sudden masterfulness. "And before we go any farther, let me be quite frank with you on another subject. I told you I was in charge of the correspondence at Euston; that was a slip of mine. I'm only one of a number of clerks in the department, and I get eighteen shillings a week. There!" he added recklessly, "now you know!"

"Thank you for a pleasant evening," she said.

"Next Sunday night at six o'clock," he said determinedly, "here in front of this undertaker's where we're standing now."

"Leave go my hand!"

"Six o'clock, and then we shall escape the people going to church."

"You've left a mark," she complained, examining her fingers. "Fancy you pretending to be all this, that, and the other! Why, you ought to be thoroughly well ashamed of yourself."

"I am!" he admitted. He lifted his hat. "Six o'clock, remember!"

She walked away at a good pace, crossing over as Fortess Road began, and humming, with great spirit, improvised words to a borrowed tune—

> "I've got a young man at last, at last,
> I've got a young man at last."

She slackened pace, saying to herself that there was no necessity to get in a minute before the time, and indeed to do so would be to create an inconvenient

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precedent. At the Boston Tavern she stopped to console a weeping baby in a perambulator, whose parents had left it whilst they obtained refreshment; Winnie found the infant's comforter and kissed its cheek and gave soothing words. She looked at her watch again on arriving at a shop where the brown blinds said in large letters:

R. O. MASTERS

FOR PARIS FASHIONS

and frantic bills at the side announced the approach of summer sales. Shocking Reductions in Prices. Everything Marked Down. We Are Determined to Clear Out Our Surplus Stock. A tall, thin man in a tweed cap stopped to light his pipe, and her heart missed a beat; she flew away madly, desperately, darting in and out of the crowd, skimming across the roadway, her hat blowing up to a vertical position. As she waited in a side street to regain breath, the tall man went by, still endeavouring to light his pipe, and seeing his features she gave a sigh of intense relief.

"I am a fool!" she said reprovingly.

At Masters's she lifted the knocker of the side door, and as a clock gave the half-hour let it fall once. Pressing the flap of the letter-box, she bent and looked through.

"That you, Winnie?"

"Yes, 'm."

She entered and closed the door behind her.

"Had an idea you'd be late. Being your first Sunday out, I was afraid you'd take advantage of it. Where have you been?"

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"Chapel, ma'am."

"What was the text?"

"Acts of the 'Postles. Chapter two. Verse twenty-two."

The lady stopped cross-examination. "Want any supper?" she asked.

"Just as soon go straight up. Good-night, ma'am."

"Rare to-do with baby to get him to bed. He wanted you, I think. Good-night, Winnie; be early in the morning."

The girl's room at the top of the house had a slanting ceiling, but one or two reminders had already taught caution. She adjusted the small looking-glass to the right angle with the aid of a pincushion, and examined her features interestedly. Unpinned her hat. Stretched her arms.

"Don't it tire you out playing the lady! Good-night, Miss Garland." She nodded to the glass. "Pleasant dreams!" She knelt at the side of the bed. "Please God bless father, and bless Bert, and bless me. Amen!"

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## CHAPTER II

"No one can call me a gadabout, said the old lady in Somers Town. I haven't been to a church since I was christened!"

WINNIE, down at five minutes to seven, with a large bouquet of ladies' shoes, found birds singing industriously in the chestnut tree at the back, as though with the knowledge that in an hour or two their music would be drowned by the clatter of traffic. She opened the window and told them to stop their row, but accompanied this with a handful of crumbs, and the birds accepted both the adverse criticism and the gift. Filling the kettle from the tap in the scullery, she lighted the gas stove, crying, "Ah, would you?" as a flame tried to catch her hand. The kitchen was small, but until Mrs. Masters and the baby came down no one disputed her sovereignty, and the girl went around with a duster, whistling as she lifted from the mantelpiece the Toby, the American clock, the two brass candlesticks, and the glass paper weight called L'Hiver that, in its best days—so it was asserted—had been able, on being reversed, to give faithful imitation of a snowstorm. Winnie offered it an opportunity (of which it did not avail itself) of reviving the performance. She made the shoes into couples, saying, "Miss Ladbrook, you'll want heeling, if not soleing, before



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you're many weeks older," and "Miss Clements, I like you, but you are a one to tread over," and "Miss Connor, wherever did you manage to pick up all that mud? You must have gone out of your way to do it," and "Miss Baker, what you'll have to treat yourself to is a new pair."

She cleaned the linoleum of the passage, whitened the steps at the side entrance, and, giving a nervous look around before venturing out, emptied the pail into the gutter. Had a brief chat with the milkman on the resignation of the head of the London Fire Brigade; she declared she no longer felt immune from disaster, but the milkman had heard good accounts of the fresh man. A few doors away, the newspaper-shop was covering its Sunday posters with later news and Winnie took off her sack apron and went along to obtain early information. "Mr. Parnell Latest" did not greatly interest her, "Singular West End Scandal" left her cold, but "Murder in South London" almost tempted her to go in and beg for the loan of a journal. A call of "Hi!" recalled her.

"This is a pretty time!" she declared.

"What's matter now?" demanded the boy aggrievedly.

"Wonder you have the cheek to show your face here. I suppose you overslept yourself."

"I never," retorted the boy. "And you leave off badgerin' me. I 'ave quite enough of that at home."

"You ought to have more," she asserted. "Boys of your age seem to expect your life to be a continual round of enjoyment. Cricket," she laughed satirically, "oh yes; but work; oh dear no! Come on down, do!

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You imagine standing 'ere chattering to me will clean that row of shoes; allow me to inform you it won't do anything of the kind. And see if you can use a little elbow grease, Robert, my lad, or else you and me will begin to have words."

As she placed six eggs in a saucepan and cut bread-and-butter, Robert, from the space called a back garden, begged her to take a fairer, a calmer, and a more judicial view of his case. Aged twelve and height four feet nine, he submitted that he did the work that many a grown man contrived to escape. A call of her name from the top of the stairs gave excuse for warning Robert not to stop so soon as her back was turned. She had made a special cup of tea for her favourite, Miss Clements, and this she carried up.

"You must just take baby for a moment," said Mrs. Masters urgently, "or else I shall never finish dressing."

The youngster gave a wriggle and a jump.

"Take the greatest care of him, Winnie, and see that he doesn't get into mischief. Don't let him play with the cat, whatever you do. Nearly ready, are you?"

"Ready and waiting, ma'am," replied the girl. "Give a good thump at their doors and tell them to hurry up. Now, then, my lord," to the excited baby as they went downstairs, "I've got you. None of your nonsense with me, you know. Any of your hoity-toity manners and I shall send off at once for Mr. Gladstone. You know what Mr. Gladstone does to naughty babies, don't you?" She sat him on the slip of carpet in front of the empty fireplace, and whispered the grisly information in confidence.

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The baby appeared chastened, and, after a few moments' consideration, his little under-lip began to droop ominously; Winnie, bustling on with her work, pointed out that Mr. Gladstone, in common with the rest of us, had his likes and dislikes, and practised cannibalism only so far as imperfect children were concerned. The method to adopt in order to escape his appetite proved easy for the well-intentioned; one had to avoid every risk of making Winnie cross, especially when Winnie had her hands full. A shrill voice from the landing inquired with acerbity how much longer breakfast was going to be, and Winnie, without replying, placed spoonfuls from the caddy in the two teapots and poured water from the steaming kettle. The voice repeated the question. "If you can't hear me," added the voice, "why not say so?" Winnie gave an answer under her breath, an answer which for some reason diverted the youngster on the carpet, and she had to caution him not to go about repeating every word that he happened to overhear.

She went up with the tray, humming a quick march, and up again to the first floor, where the front windows bore the words "Show Room." In a screened corner at the back four young women sat near an oilcloth-covered table, rubbing their heads, kneading their eyes, and giving the "Oah!" of the luxurious yawner. At the sight of the tray they brightened.

"Catch hold of one end," begged Winnie, throwing the tablecloth along. "Try and be useful if you can't be ornamental. How did you get on yesterday all of you? Miss Ladbrook, you'd better be mother and pour out. Mrs. Masters won't be down for a few minutes."

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"What were you doing in that restaurant last night?"

"Having a shampoo," she replied. "Let me see, Miss Ladbrook and Miss Clements, you like yours boiled 'ard; Miss Connor and Miss Baker, you like yours boiled soft. There you are!" taking up the tray. "Don't say now that I never do nothing for you."

"The girl's grammar!" cried Miss Ladbrook.

"I talked grammar," said Winnie, "yesterday evening, till I tired myself out, and I'm giving my brain a bit of a rest." She drummed on the tray. "Did any of you four have larks?"

"You needn't wait," said Miss Ladbrook coldly.

The boy Robert found time, after executing one or two commissions, to show a new exercise in calisthenics which he had learnt, consisting of placing the hands together high up and endeavouring in lowering them slowly to touch the foot; the baby in an attempt to perform this fell over and, from disappointment and personal damage, cried aloud. Winnie, repeating the exercise, affected to make a failure similar to his; he comforted her by smiting emphatically the place on the floor and denouncing it as naughty.

"I say," remarked Robert, appealingly and privately on going. "Don't start pitching into me every morning. What I mean to say is this, we've known each other for some weeks now. You see what I'm driving at; it isn't as though we were absolute strangers." He ran off confusedly ere she could reply.

The ladies upstairs said she could have one of the teapots, and Miss Ladbrook mentioned that the

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addition of a small amount of hot water, not necessarily boiling, would produce a cup of a strength appropriate to a girl of Winnie's age. The girl met Mr. Masters on the landing and said, "Morning, sir!" but either the salutation did not reach his ears or Mr. Masters was absorbed in thought. She told baby in emptying the teapot into the coal scuttle that some people liked tannin, but that she did not count herself among the number, and in making a fresh brew urged him to remember that in this world most people were artful, but there always existed some more artful than others. She drank to his very good health, and rewarded him for an imitation of the cry of the milkman—necessitating an extraordinary twist of the features—with a drink from a saucer. He affected, after this, to be a victim to hiccoughs, but she remarked that if he wanted a lump of sugar he had better ask straightforwardly and not try to obtain it by subterfuge.

The girl gave herself but ten minutes at breakfast, and as she did so, rocking her chair to and fro, she mapped out the tasks of the morning. There came contentment in the feeling that she worked behind the scenes at Masters's; that she knew, from occasional glimpses, the manner adopted on one side of the counter, and could compare it with methods used when the public eye was not present. She had acquaintance with the smile worn by the young ladies when on duty, and the frown with which they relaxed features on other occasions; held the information that stock had been purchased largely for the sales, and that scarcely a line on the bills distributed—and in

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most cases dropped at once—could be sworn to without the committal of perjury. Next to Sunday, which might be regarded as giving the note of perfection, Monday could be counted at Masters's as the best. The sales made a difference, but in a general way the morning only just indicated the beginning of the game, a miss in baulk as it were, and when the young ladies had made their beds, and whilst windows of the shop were being dressed and contents of boxes set out, and lines hung with articles and everything dusted, Mr. Masters (otherwise R. O.), giving careful attention to his finger nails, and trimming his cuffs, made jokes in his native language, which, being translated by him, appeared to lose so much of their original flavour that the ladies were always fearful of giving signs of amusement too early or too late; the more acute veiled features with a handkerchief when the gist or point of the anecdote seemed to be near, emerging later with audible remarks to each other.

"Wherever does he get them all from?"

"I never came across anyone who had such a rare budget!"

"There's no end to them!"

"It's more in the manner than anything. When I try to repeat them to friends, they go for nothing!"

After which R. O. went to the desk to think out new ideas. R. O., when he found one of exceptional brilliancy, talked slightingly of Oxford Street and with contempt of Tottenham Court Road. The young ladies frequently agreed that Masters's was not a hard place; Miss Ladbrook sometimes added satirically that if one wanted to be unsuccessful much could be done by

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kindness. Hitherto R. O.'s greatest idea had been to lure Kentish Town by selling certain articles at cost price, and hitherto Kentish Town had restricted its patronage almost entirely to these articles, but R. O. said the great thing was to obtain a following. Once you secured a following you could reckon yourself safe for life.

"You little blackamoor!" cried Winnie, snatching suddenly at the baby. "Oh, you Christy Minstrel, you! How dare you crawl over to the coal-box and make your hands and face in such a mess! Come along and be washed before your mother comes down, or else we shall all be in hot water. Strange thing that directly Winnie's back is turned you must go and get into mischief! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, eh?"

The work of the morning began in real earnest so soon as Mrs. Masters came down and relieved Winnie of the charge of the boy. He fought and he kicked, and it seemed likely that victory would be with him, but a truce was arranged; after this came a consultation about dinner. The girl had a free hand so far as the kitchen was concerned, providing always that economy did not go out of sight. "We're not niggardly," said Mrs. Masters, "although we can't afford to be the opposite. I will have the young ladies fed well, whatever Mr. Masters says. I suffered too much from want of good food when I was about their age; there's no necessity, though, to overdo it. As Mr. Masters often remarks, a meal needn't become an orgie."

Light work on Monday in the kitchen, for yesterday's joint would go up at one o'clock, and the governor's

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powers of carving could be relied upon to make it go round, eked out by new potatoes and a roly-poly pudding. There existed, as Winnie knew, an element of chance about her cooking; if they knew all, they would be surprised at finding good results so often, and the girl always masked satisfaction at any compliments received by assuming an air of perfect confidence. In the kitchen she cleared the table and scrubbed it violently, making the hissing noise used by ostlers. Upstairs, presently, she set the three rooms to rights, a task frequently interrupted because the next-door people were hanging clothes out; it was possible with Venetian blinds to avoid the appearance of curiosity, but curiosity itself was not so easily restrained. She borrowed a little of the scent belonging to Miss Clements, examining the bottle first to see whether it had been marked; three pennies which she found on the carpet she placed carefully on the pincushion of the dressing-table. Miss Connor's new hat suited her fairly well, but she thought it had too many roses.

Downstairs again the American clock, a bustling, turbulent timepiece, with a tremendous amount of work to get through, showed the hour to be close upon ten. It was the off-Monday for washing; but some towels and odd things had to be seen to, and as she took the zinc tub out into the back garden a cough summoned her attention.

"With you in a minute," she answered.

The sight of Miss Clements alternately beckoning to her with a handkerchief and raising it for the solace of eyes did not induce her to cut short con-

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versation with the girl next door. Miss Clements and her grievance could wait, but the girl next door once arrested in speech would remain dumb and haughty for hours. Discussion near the low wall (but not so low that Winnie could see over without standing on tiptoe) began with a question: how had Winnie enjoyed her evening out, and had anything of moment occurred? Winnie replied that the evening out might be described as fair to middling.

"I must tell you,' said the girl next door, gratified by the absence of competing information. "In the first place, listen to this!"

Particulars of a dispute with her mistress that morning, and if the imitation of voices could be relied upon as exact, the mistress was left at the end of the dispute cringing, penitent, and apologetic. Also, at the hour of eleven on the previous night, she had been aroused by sounds of a furious row between husband and wife at the Berlin wool shop; the wife, hitherto looked upon by neighbours as a mild, uncomplaining person, the slave of a husband who did a little betting and a little fire insurance, and was supposed to fill up the rest of his time by taking an interest in political affairs, this wife, in answer to a request for an advance of money to permit of a visit to Kempton, suddenly turned, it seemed; ordered him to dress and get out of the house and never come back, and on the husband showing a certain coyness in acting upon these instructions, took him——

"And sent him bumpety-bump down the stairs!" said the girl with relish. "I'll let you know if anything further 'appens. Spoilt my night's rest, but it give me something to think about. The latest is

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that he's gone to get the help of some friends of his at Bermondsey. What's the matter? What made you turn pale when I mentioned Bermondsey? Have you got friends there? I do wish," added the girl next door complainingly, "that you'd be open and straightforward like I am."

Miss Clements had come down to the kitchen door, and now stood there, tearfully begging permission to enter. This given with the warning that there was work to be done, and only one pair of hands to do it, Winnie, sleeves rolled up above the elbow, applied herself vigorously to duties. Miss Clements announced tragically that this represented her last day on earth, and the sooner it was all over the better pleased she would feel. Miss Clements' mother rested at Woking, and Winnie was asked to express an opinion and say whether, in her view, any difficulty seemed likely to be experienced in placing the body of Miss Clements in the same cemetery.

"We'll manage it somehow," said Winnie. "Don't you worry about that. What's been the trouble?"

Miss Clements, recovering from a new access of tears, thought Winnie, by guessing the cause, might have spared her this question. Surely common sense could have told her that Miss Ladbrook, and nobody but Miss Ladbrook, was capable of upsetting one to this painful extent. A most unkind remark had come from Miss Ladbrook's lips, unkind and unnecessary. Miss Clements was, it appeared, in the act of laughing it off, when the true intent came to her, and then, anyone armed with a feather might have sent Miss Clements flat down upon the floor. Two customers happened to be in the shop

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at the time, and, but for their presence, Miss Clements would have been tempted to hurl a cardboard box at the offender, taking refuge afterwards in hysterics; looking back upon it all, she doubted whether, by abstaining, she had chosen the better path.

"Might leave me that brooch you sometimes wear in the afternoons," suggested Winnie. Miss Clements did not understand. "You can't take it with you where you're going. May just as well give it to me. I'll be kind to it."

Miss Clements, whilst admitting that first thoughts had been of a grim description, was not now prepared to take any course likely to give even momentary satisfaction to a creature like Miss Ladbrook. Rather did she feel inclined to wait for opportunity, and then rap out some bitter remark, causing Miss Ladbrook to regret with bitterness the day of Miss Ladbrook's birth. If Miss Clements could only think of the right word to say, she would go upstairs at once, and, declaring her neuralgia better, speak plainly.

"We'll leave it at that, then. Get out of my kitchen soon as you can, and don't you worry too much about things that don't matter."

"But I want you, Winnie, to give me an idea what to say. Supposing she had made this remark about you. You've helped me before; help me once again, there's a dear."

Winnie accepted the thanks for her suggestion, and once more hinted plainly that at this hour of the day she could dispense with company. Miss Clements went, rehearsing the sentence to be hurled at her opponent, and had to be reminded of the rules in vogue



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concerning the closing of a door. Winnie felt a certain interest later in discovering that Miss Ladbrook left a good half-plateful at lunch.

Undoubtedly there were worse places than Masters's. When at any hour the kitchen seemed lonely, she had but to take a brush and dustpan to the top of the stairs, and there, doing nothing with industry, she overheard conversation in the shop, courteous remarks of the four assistants to dazed, puzzled ladies unable to make up minds in regard to quality, price, quantity, colour, shade, or any other subject; mildly defensive arguments used towards irascible customers; the high voice of R. O. coming in frequently to swell the volume and to confuse the issue. When a commercial traveller drove up and came into the shop, greeting R. O. with extraordinary effusiveness, inducing R. O. to take him to the desk at the back on the grounds that he had something to tell him that could not be mentioned in a mixed company, then Winnie gave up all pretence of work, but could never gain more than the governor's appreciative ejaculation—

"Good! Very good indeed. I must try to remember that one. That's the best I've heard for a long time!"

R. O. was able that afternoon to announce the gratifying circumstance of the birth of an entirely new idea. Mrs. Masters was to be about—a duty vaguely expressed, but clearly understood—during the busy hours; nothing had been missed up to the present, but with customers attracted by the enormous advantages offered by the establishment, and coming from all parts of North London and, for all one knew, from the South

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side, it seemed impossible to be over careful. The opportunity of these light-handed folk came, said R. O. (who had once reproved a customer for picking a needle from the floor and sticking it absently in her blouse), when the two counters were crowded from end to end with remnants and enticing pieces of stuff, and everyone connected with the place was busily engaged in waiting on patrons. Mrs. Masters accordingly received instructions to dress up and impersonate a customer from Highgate, and, whilst waiting, to keep a watchful eye, keep two watchful eyes, indeed, on everything. Wherefore, the baby had to be entrusted for his afternoon outing to the care of Winnie, and at three o'clock the mail-cart went out of the side entrance pursued by warnings, entreaties, commands.

"Baby's going to be the nicest, goodest, goodest boy in all Kentish Town, isn't he?" said the mother, with a note of appeal. "He's going to show everybody how well he can behave. He's going to be the bestest, bestest—oh, wicked little man to knock his hat off like that. Mummy's surprised at him! Winnie, if he's a naughty boy," speaking with great distinctness, "you tell me when you come back, and then he'll have to be punished. Give him a good hard smack if he's naughty. Mind," in lower tones, "don't you dare touch him whilst you're out. If you do, depend upon it, I shall get to know of it from someone. You just let him do as he likes. One more kiss, my booful booful. Be nice to Winnie. Say 'Ta-ta, Mamma!'"

Both the young people gave an ejaculation of relief when, as the mail-cart turned into Highgate Road, last exchange of farewells was given. The baby treated

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Winnie in going along as one fresh to the charms and novelties of London life, pointing with great animation to a horse, a toy-shop, a railway arch, and another baby. They crossed as they neared the Heath, and there Winnie's special attention was directed, with great insistence, to the grass; the small guide, on being challenged to give the colour, endeavoured to evade a confession of ignorance by passing on to some other subject, but Winnie told him the grass was green, and he repeated the statement several times with a great air of being the first to give the information.

"Not so much cackle, young man," ordered Winnie. They went along the gravelled path of the Heath. "I haven't come out to listen to your conversation; I've come out here to have a read and a think."

They sat near some trees with a good view of the ponds and of the churches and houses up on the heights beyond, and had a game; when the baby hurt himself and showed inclination for tears, he was ridiculed out of this by Winnie's little finger, which she declared to be laughing at him; when he gave signs of fractiousness, the old threat to summon a Prime Minister restored him to excellent behaviour. Tiring presently, he consented to return to his mail-cart, where, his small head propped up by cushions, he slept, and Winnie, producing from the back pocket of her skirt a carefully folded penny magazine, gave herself to the joys of literature, her lips moving silently as she read, her eyes large at perilous situations, under-lip held by teeth when the troubles of the heroine became parlous.

"We will now proceed," said Winnie, refolding the magazine, and making herself comfortable by resting

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against a thick tree, "we will now proceed to consider our own adventures. Hasn't been much time to do so before. Arthur Lord. Arthur Lord, Esquire."

She admitted a strong preference for barristers; those found in stories were always clean-shaven, square-chinned, hair turning slightly grey, and with an amazing gift for appearing at the exact and precise moment when most urgently required; acute of mind, too able to detect sometimes a flaw in a document that made all the difference. Artists possessed certain attractions, one of which was that they never had to absent themselves from society on account of their work. The drop from these to a railway clerk could not be looked upon as other than considerable, but in this world one had to take what one could get. A pencil and a piece of paper, her lap for desk.

"MY OWN DEAREST,—Forgive me for not having written to you this morning, but I have been shopping in the West End nearly the whole of the day. I have decided on the crimson chairs, and hope you will agree.

"I think it will be best to have a lawn at the back, and no kitchen garden. We can buy a large Japanese umbrella for the centre, and if friends drop in, the girl will show them right through, and they can take tea there, with cake and jam and anything else that is in season.

"My people, after a long time to think it over, have now decided to come to the wedding, and my dear father has presented me with a valuable necklace of diamonds, which has been in the family for years.

"My brother Bert is coming up from Shorncliffe on

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purpose, and will bring with him some of his fellow-officers. I should like our photos put in the newspaper if it can be managed. All now promises well.

"Believe me, with x x x x x, yours ever,

"WINIFRED

"You will not forget the brooches for the bridesmaids."

A boy, the picture of solitude, was having a mournful game of cricket by himself, throwing the ball in the air, giving it a swipe, and when successful as a batsman having to pay dearly as a fielder. Winnie strolled over to him when she had torn up the letter and offered to bowl, and did bowl, and bowled him out; but the boy, acting as his own umpire, decided that as the stumps, the bat, and the ball were his property, he was clearly entitled to three innings to her one. When her turn came she made eight, which would have been more only that the lad always cried "Lost ball" when she attempted to take more than one run.

Winnie was near Fortess Road, wheeling the fast-asleep baby, and back again in her dreams of the future, whistling softly the tune of "Jerusalem the Golden"; (she had stopped twice to see the name given on church boards of the person to whom notices of marriage had to be given). At sound of the voice of Mr. Masters she dropped handles of the mail-cart and turned; at sight of the woman wearing a bonnet with red cherries, whom he was following, she became white and bowed her head ashamedly.

"You dare to come within a hundred miles of my

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shop!" Mr. Masters was screaming. He carried a couple of waist-belts, which he had apparently taken from the woman. "And I'll send for the police, yes I will. I believe, indeed, you belong to those people who were making the disturbance outside the Berlin wool place. Go away, and keep away, I tell you."

R. O.'s voice went into a lofty key and vanished.

"This," said the girl, in frightened tones to baby in the mail-cart, "this brings the shutters down on me for a bit!"

. . . . . .

Winnie, searching for a chapel on a Sunday evening after a period of retreat, had not far to walk ere she encountered posters—"All Are Welcome" and "Books Provided" and "Bright and Breezy Services." In by-streets meetings were being held around a lamp, and earnest men, ignoring the rules of punctuation, bawled excitedly, whirling arms and banging a fist of one hand into the palm of the other. The girl had no prejudices in favour of any particular sect, but these folk seemed anxious to paint themselves and everyone in depressing colours; to emphasise errors and to refer to their own earlier days with morbid relish; the girl desired something of a more restful nature. Through the doors of a church she saw an altar with candles lighted; a man, wearing a black gown, smiled a grave welcome, and she went in.

An hour and a half later she came out, viewing the world with serene temper, proud to have shaken hands with someone wearing on his head a biretta, and feeling, so far as she could judge, an addition of at least three inches in height. Also, there was the profit of a new

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tune, "Brightest and best are the sons of the morning," and she knew that if she could but impress this upon her memory it would prove useful in domestic tasks; nothing like a good swinging air to encourage one to work rapidly, apart from which it would at any time bring back the entire scene. Her troubles had entirely disappeared. Earlier in the evening they piled themselves up, one on the top of the other, so that she staggered under the weight of them; now she laughed at the thought of their comparative unimportance. People remarked, in awed tones, as they came out of the church—

"But it's very, very high."

On this point Winnie did not know, and did not care. She liked the music, she had been impressed by the stately marching around the church; the uplifted cross, the perfume, the importance of the vestments pleased her; there was one special boy in the choir (she could just see him by standing on a hassock), and she would have given the coppers in her purse to be allowed to go up when all was over and give him a kiss. Something in his wonderful notes had nearly made the tears come. Best of all, oddly enough, was the sermon. The sermon had been one of the few—she had not heard many in all—one of the very few to which she could listen from beginning to end. The man in the pulpit seemed to be a man; his knowledge of the difficulties met in ordinary life by ordinary people made one open the eyes and wonder what he was going to say next. Only in a single regard did Winnie feel inclined to argue. The claims of truth, he contended, were too lightly respected; a greater effort must be made to restrain oneself from

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straying into inaccuracy. He admitted it was often easier to invent than to report correctly; the literal truth rarely lent itself to belief; he conceded that those who pinned themselves at four corners to exactitude frequently had no other aim in view but that of giving offence to neighbours. He ridiculed the claims of men who, calling themselves John Blunt, felt justified in ignoring tact and discretion. At the same time——

"He gave it me straight," declared Winnie. "If he'd known me all my life he couldn't have scored more bulls' eyes. A bell might have rung every time. But what he didn't quite realise," she went on to herself argumentatively, "is this. That when the reality doesn't seem over and above pleasant, it isn't a bad idea to pretend that you're somebody else. For people who've got everything they want there's no excuse, but for those of us—— Hullo! How's the world using you?"

She would have passed on if Miss Enefer had given the information, but the young woman replied with reserve.

"What's up?" demanded Winnie. "Come into some money?"

"It's all over," said Miss Enefer tragically.

"Cross here," counselled Winnie, "to the quiet side of the road, and tell me about it. Everyone comes to me with their troubles; I like listening to them. Makes me forget my own."

"It's like this," began Miss Enefer, with a gulp. "Before I went out to-night to meet him I put on a pair of white gloves—well, not exactly white, but you know. I assure you, dear, if it's the last words I utter, I was in a livelier mood than I've been for a long time.

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When we came near I held out my hand so, because it doesn't look quite the thing to let a young gentleman kiss you so near home; you never know who may be looking. He took my hand, and the moment he took my hand he looked at my glove and says, 'I'm so sorry,' he says, 'so sorry to hear about your loss. When did your uncle go off?'"

"And you slapped his face?"

"Wish I had now," said Miss Enefer penitently, "but I didn't quite see what he was driving at at first. If he thinks I can afford to put on a pair of brand-new gloves every time I go out to meet him he's jolly well mistaken. And, as I pointed out to him," she added vehemently, "the idea of giving me a pair never so much as enters his mind."

"And then?"

"Oh," with luxury, "we went at it hammer and tongs. He got off a lot of remarks that he'd been saving up, and I gave him back quite as good as he gave me. I said he ought to learn how to walk, and he said I ought to learn how to talk. I said he should look out for some girl who'd lost her senses, and he said he was fond of a change or else he would. He went away in a rare huff, and directly he was gone I recollected one or two remarks I might have made and didn't."

"And now you're just beginning to wish you hadn't said quite so much?"

"Whoever told you?" demanded Miss Enefer.

"Best thing you can do is to go home and write him a note."

"That I certainly shan't."

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"And tell him not to take any notice of what you said, and to let by-gones be by-gones and to start afresh."

"How do you spell by-gones?" asked Miss Enefer. "Isn't it rather undignified to appeal to a fellow in that way? Stroll along home my way and advise me. Somehow I took to you, dear, from the very first. You seem to have such a happy disposition. I suppose it is through not having any worries."

"That must be it," agreed Winnie.

Miss Enefer gave a good rap with the knocker; the door in the centre of the fruiterer's shop opened, and a tall, middle-aged woman, peeping out, said, "What, home already?" Miss Enefer's mother announced frankly that she was neither expecting strangers nor desirous of their arrival; the presence of company had been endured all the afternoon, and she had released herself from some of the trammels dictated by fashion; the knock had aroused her from the sofa. Upstairs Mrs. Enefer said a curt word in commendation of Winnie's blouse, inquired the price and place of origin, and threatened, providing she lived long enough, to purchase one exactly like it at Masters's on the morrow. She presumed Winnie had paid the visit in the hope of obtaining supper; Winnie declared she could not eat anything even though she were rewarded for doing so with large sums, whereupon Mrs. Enefer ordered the daughter to spread the cloth half-way across the oval table, and set out there a most admirable meat-and-potato pie which had already received a fair amount of patronage, with a dish of cold

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peas and new potatoes and lettuce that could not be resisted.

"Now then," she ordered sharply, "make yourself at home, and don't stand on ceremony, or else you and me'll quarrel. My daughter here will tell you I'm soon put out, and when I am put out I generally manage to put other people out. No two ways about me. Her poor father used to say to me when I was in my tantrums, 'You'd find yourself a lot better, my dear, if you swore a bit like I do.'"

"It's unladylike," interposed her daughter sedately, "to use bad words."

"I suppose so," agreed her mother doubtfully. "And yet—— Take your brother Moltke, for instance. He has to go to Covent Garden in the early mornings with the horse and van, and if he didn't use language down there, they'd never understand what he meant. Of course, in the house he's different. Here he's a child, and he has to behave as such. The green-grocery," to Winnie, "is a wearing business. Makes everyone look their age, mind you. What should you guess I was?"

They expressed astonishment on hearing that Winnie had passed her seventeenth birthday, and begged her to reconsider the matter; Mrs. Enefer herself at Winnie's years had been likened to a hop-pole, and dressmakers down in the country wept over her, boys asked her to pluck walnuts, old women of the village prophesied she would live and die an old maid. And at twenty she had begun to reconcile herself to a single state, and no longer felt hurt by the pointed valentines sent to her in February, the

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reminders given by aunts on her birthday in April, when, lo and behold, Enefer appeared.

"I can see him now," declared Mrs. Enefer impressively.

Enefer appeared. Enefer, bent on purchasing in advance the produce of cherry orchards, caught sight of her sluicing down a back yard, skirt pinned up, and made taller than usual by reason of pattens, and being a man accustomed to do business promptly, not only bought three orchards, but gave her an affectionate pinch on the arm and asked to be told her Christian name.

"And I'm telling you this," she said truculently, "so that you should see that you never know what luck there is in store. My girl here gets down-hearted sometimes, and says, 'Oh, mother, I'm beginning to give up all hopes.' And then I tell her how, by the Parliamentary train from London one fine morning down came Enefer."

Winnie remarked that so far as she was concerned she saw no special need for hurry, although she certainly did intend to get married one day. Miss Enefer went further by bursting into a passionate tirade against young men, their conceit, their impudence, their want of reliability. This over, she remembered she had a letter to write which might be posted by Winnie, thus saving the trouble of putting on again laced-up boots, and she left the two for a few minutes. Mrs. Enefer utilised the time by cross-examination that proved singularly lacking in satisfactory results; Winnie parried the questions adroitly, and presently Mrs. Enefer gave it all up with,

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"Well, I don't know but what you're right in keeping everything to yourself, my dear."

Which almost induced the girl to throw away defence and tell her everything. This type of mother was new to her; she would have liked to place her head on Mrs. Enefer's shoulders and get comfort, but the mere thought of confiding in anyone without restraint caused her to shake her head reprovingly. This was the worst of going to church and being made to feel that there were better ways of conducting one's life.

"Come again, mind," said Mrs. Enefer sharply. "No looking down on us just because we keep a fruiterer's. I know how high and mighty you ladies in the drapery line can be, but so long as one gets a living honestly——" She patted the girl's face. "As I say, it's a wonderful world, and anything may happen at any moment. I suppose that's what induces everybody to stay on in it as long as they can!"

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## CHAPTER III

"From across the sea I have come, said he, to find a lady fair:
It's a wife I lack, and to go alone back is more than a man can bear."

THE truth of Mrs. Enefer's hopeful remark found a striking illustration.

The three times regulation in regard to accidents rarely failed in Winnie's experience, and the number once complete something of a gratifying nature could be reasonably anticipated. Here, after the third blow (the second connected with the breaking of a dish, the third with a cut of a useful finger), did come happenings that gave romance and excitement to Masters's, radiating good humour up Fortess Road, and down Fortess Road, and across the way. In Continental cities something of the kind is seen perhaps when an inhabitant produces the number for the big prize in a lottery; in Kentish Town it seemed the nearest approach to the wave of a fairy wand. All old feuds were packed up and placed upon the highest shelf; affectionate phrases that had not been in demand for some time were dusted and brought down; Winnie found herself summoned repeatedly by the girl next door, and urgently begged to communicate the latest news; when she ran up the road (never without a cautious look around) to buy



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eggs or a sprig of mint, shopkeepers' wives hailed her appealingly—

"Shan't keep you half a second! Do tell us!"

Dull young women at other establishments became bright as they discussed the subject; postmen carried the news to private houses so far distant as Patshull Road, and people who had never been in Masters's before came now, making small purchases and asking that Miss Clements might be pointed out to them. R. O. made a new joke—new to him—every afternoon after the deliberations of a morning, and the baby went out in his mail-cart waving a small Union Jack with enthusiasm. Miss Clements herself declared tearfully a belief that it must be a dream, and that she would presently wake up and find herself late for breakfast. Winnie offered, sportively, to exchange with her.

The amazing thing that had happened was this. Miss Clements, the dispute with Miss Ladbrook over, after lasting for some weeks, slackened her affection for Miss Baker, the apprentice, and Miss Connor, discontinued confidence with Winnie downstairs, and enjoyed the keen delights of resuming friendship with a one-time enemy, and giving to her opinions concerning Miss Baker and Miss Connor. To Miss Ladbrook, and to Miss Ladbrook alone, did Miss Clements on the morning in question declare that something was going to happen (Winnie made mental note of this as an illuminating incident, showing that coming events invariably threw a warning shadow). Miss Clements and Miss Ladbrook were, in fact, dressing the left-hand window, and Miss Clements had gone outside to the pavement, where, by hand-

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signalling, she conveyed to Miss Ladbrook suggestions in regard to the placing of headgear called Noveautés de Paris, and perched rakishly on the top of stick-like supports. To Miss Clements on the pavement came a brown-faced man in a well-made suit, who, after gazing at her in a way that, as she declared, made the palm of her right hand tingle, said, "Pardon me, but isn't your name Nellie?" Now, Miss Clements had twenty-two years previously been christened Ellen Eliza; the second name she dropped as vulgar and superfluous, and the first she amended, and it did not occur to her for the moment that the correct answer was in the affirmative. "That's peculiar," he replied, puzzled. "It isn't often I make a mistake." The young woman remarked coldly that he had, at any rate, made one now, and, turning, gave some directions by gesture. "Little Nellie Clements," the brown-faced man persisted, "who used to go to a Board school Clapham way." Slightly relaxing, she said he had the advantage of her, whereupon he produced some envelopes, and Miss Clements, reading the name, cried, "Oh, fancy!" and was entering the shop, when, to her astonishment, Mr. Dray followed her. R. O. came forward, and Mr. Dray said he wanted a pair of gloves. R. O. regretted they did not keep these for gentlemen's wear. "What size do you take?" asked the man, turning to Miss Clements. She, with a look at R. O., faltered a reply. "Very well," producing a handful of gold coins, "a dozen pairs six and three-quarters, any colour you like to choose." Miss Clements sat upon the nearest high chair to avoid dropping all of a heap, and the man, speaking to R. O., ordered him to go up



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to the back and catch flies. "Look here," he said briskly to Miss Clements, "I'm over from Canada, and I'm going back in a month's time. I want to take a wife home with me. You had a bright, cheerful disposition when you were a child; what do you say about it? No time to waste, and you'll do as well as anybody. What's your answer?"

R. O. at the desk went into the question of finances, Mrs. Masters comforted Miss Clements, telling her that there was nothing to cry about, the other young women urged her to bear up. She moaned for Winnie, and it being obvious that she was for the time useless in the shop, Mrs. Masters conveyed her downstairs and left her with the girl, who listened to the facts and at once took charge of the management. To the feeble suggestion that a certain reticence should be exhibited Winnie retorted promptly—

"That be blowed for a tale!"

Going on to describe life in Quebec with a freedom and spaciousness possible only to one not restrained by knowledge of facts. The climate, the society, the prospect of making new friends had received enthusiastic approval, when a bass voice called down the stairs—

"Well?"

And Miss Clements found herself, from agitation, unable to speak a word; Winnie, assuming a tremulous voice, replied on her behalf—

"It's 'Yes,' dear."

"Right!" said the bass voice. "Round again this evening. Good-bye till then."

A committee was formed without delay to watch the

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interests of Miss Clements, and a more determined, more whole-hearted committee never existed in regard to any social or Parliamentary matter; Miss Clements, in lucid intervals, expressed obligations, promised that the wedding should, for the convenience of all parties, take place on a Thursday, and set about to arrange details. Miss Ladbrook protested there was no need to invite Winnie, who, all said and done, could only be looked upon as a servant, whereupon the bride, with unexpected decisiveness, retorted that they would wait until they were asked, but that she could not look forward to a moment's peace of mind were she to neglect to show Winnie the consideration always due from girl to girl, especially due to one who had comforted her at times when she had felt inclined to give up.

"Kind of you," said Winnie. She said it awkwardly, not being in the habit of thanking anybody for anything. "And now let me give you, miss,—shortly to be ma'am, —one last word of advice. Not so much snivelling. A little less of the dewdrop in the eye. Give up this silly trick of bursting into tears every time the clock strikes a quarter. Your future companion doesn't want to take you out there just in order to teach Canada how to cry."

With the dazzling prospect of a wonderful afternoon, Winnie reminded herself frequently that something untoward was certain to happen; she watched for all the signs of impending disaster with apprehension. On several occasions omens came which could not be interpreted in more ways than one, and she gave Miss Connor instructions not to embark upon the unnecessary

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task of trimming a hat for her. Providence, however, sent a critical neighbour to remark to Mrs. Masters of the baby that he was looking white—the fact being that the mere sight of the neighbour arranging her features in a manner supposed to be ingratiating was enough to strike terror into the heart of any babe—and Mrs. Masters, after contradicting this flatly, upbraided herself for not wheeling him out in the sunshine more frequently, blamed Winnie for failing to remind her of this duty, and announced that the Thursday afternoon of the wedding would be devoted by her to personal superintendence of the welfare of her son. Winnie had then to confess that in spite of signs and portents, such as twisted mirrors, red-haired women, and passing by someone on the stairs, it did seem probable that luck for once was going to range itself on her side. Gratifying rumours came, confirming the suspicion that Mr. Dray meant to celebrate the occasion notably and well: R. O. had six white waistcoats sent from Pringle's, Hosiers and Outfitters, to try on; a dressmaker near the railway bridge in Kentish Town Road began to turn grey. On the morning of the day Masters's declined to behave as a shop, and turned itself into a salon for the reception of visitors who had no thoughts of buying yards of ribbon, lengths of calico, sets of collars and cuffs, but wished only to know what the bride looked like, and how she was bearing it all. At two o'clock, shutters flew up from the basement.

"Winnie!"

"Yes'm?"

"The carriage is waiting."

"What carriage, ma'am?"

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"Why," explained Mrs. Masters, "the carriage that's going to drive you all up to Hampstead."

"My goodness gracious!" said Winnie. "Whatever next?"

R. O., straw-hatted, and trying to light a cigar, sat by the driver, and Miss Ladbrook and Miss Connor faced the horses; Miss Baker and Winnie took the opposite seats; the entire party made an endeavour to talk sanely as they started, without achieving anything that could be likened to success. At the corner of Castle Road Miss Enefer waved an arm and cheered; Winnie bowed sedately, and hoped everybody known to her would be sent to watch the triumphant progress, with the exception of those whom she feared. Miss Ladbrook leaned back as one used to conveyance by open carriage; the other three sat upright. Folk on tramcars looked over and made remarks; the three young women implored Winnie not to make answer, and she declared indignantly that she had no thoughts of doing so. A commercial traveller near the Mansfield gave them courteous recognition with a sweep of a silk hat.

"Enjoying yourself, Winnie?" asked Miss Ladbrook patronisingly. "This is a novelty for you."

"'Tisn't an everyday occurrence for any of us."

"We must try to behave nicely at table, presently."

"Watch me!" said Winnie. "Do exactly as I do and you won't go far wrong."

"You ought to be very thankful you're allowed to come with us," cried Miss Ladbrook exasperatedly. "There aren't many in your position in life who would be tolerated here."

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"You're talking too much," she interrupted, "and your face is getting to look like a ripe tomato."

The bride and bridegroom, just arrived from the registrar's, stood at the gate beside the hotel; the bride, a smile and nothing but a smile; the bridegroom, a grave man, but proud. And, from the bridegroom,

"How do you do, Miss Ladbrook, how do you do, Miss Baker, how do you do, Miss Connor?" Finally, "How do you do, Miss Garland?" Miss Ladbrook made an ejaculation. "Mr. Masters, this is kind of you to give us an afternoon. Driver, put your horses up, and get something solid to eat, and something liquid to drink. Mr. Masters, if you will kindly conduct my wife —my wife, I say, to the table set out over there in the corner of the garden, I will escort the other ladies in the same direction. Miss Garland, may I offer you my arm? You've been here before, I suppose?"

"Not to my knowledge," she replied precisely.

Waiters in full dress and wearing bowler hats shifted the table slightly, that it might be entirely in the shade, and the bride and bridegroom sat together with R. O. on the lady's right, Winnie on the bridegroom's left, the other three ladies together. The air blew a pleasant scent of wallflowers as a first course; R. O. fixed his serviette well into his collar, for the better protection of the new fancy waistcoat, and Winnie observed just in time that members of her sex spread theirs upon the lap. Miss Ladbrook, bending across the table, asked Winnie whether she had remembered to put trees in the boots after seeing them cleaned that morning, and the girl in reply advised her to say grace, and thereafter open her mouth only for the purpose of taking food.

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R. O., taking charge of the conversation, believed he was well inside the mark in stating five hundred millions —he professed to give round numbers only—of sardines were consumed in Great Britain between a certain month in the year and a certain other month in the year. If the tins containing them were placed on end they would reach from such a place to such a place. Soup was a dish consumed by the French in large quantities; it had been estimated by those in a position to know that five-eighths of the French people took soup for dinner every day of their lives. Salmon was a fish caught mainly in Scotch rivers; the number secured annually might be taken roughly as so many. Cucumber went very well with salmon, but it was a vegetable that lent itself to waste; three thousand five hundred families could be fed on the portions of a cucumber that, in average households, were thrown away. Thus R. O., with the air of a lecturer, determined to improve and to fill the minds of his audience, until lamb and new peas came across the lawn, when he said with appetite,

"Ah, now here's something indeed we can get our teeth into."

And gave up the task of distributing information.

Had Miss Garland ever been to Canada? No (replying to the bridegroom), Miss Garland had not adventured so far from home. If she should ever find herself in that direction, would she promise to call and spend a week or two with the Drays; there was always a spare horse, and he felt sure the wife would make her welcome. Winnie urged him, on no account, to stay in with the hope and expectation of receiving a call; London was good enough for her. He declared the

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country provided a great opening for those willing to work, and any girl wanting a husband could find one there. The ladies opposite begged that he would repeat the interesting statement. The bride, behind her husband's chair, inquired what Winnie thought of Mr. Dray, and received the satisfactory answer that she had undoubtedly drawn a lucky number; Winnie could only hope, when her time came, for equal good fortune.

"Tea," announced Mr. Dray, "at half-past four. After that my proposition is—— But I'll talk it over with my wife."

The married couple went off arm in arm, and Miss Connor, the while R. O. gave to the other two a few sentences that he had fully intended to use, if opportunity had offered for a speech, offered to race Winnie so far as a certain tree. This resulting in a dead heat, another race was arranged, and they ran this, and ran another, so that presently they found themselves on a hill, from which they could see a game of cricket below, and there they rested, Winnie applauding the finer specimens of batting and the better efforts of fielding with perfect impartiality. Miss Connor assuming a new character, produced a cigarette-case, and reclining at full length puffed to the blue skies, and after reciting all that she knew of "Shamus O'Brien," begged Winnie not to allow herself to be struck by a cricket ball, and fell asleep. Winnie, unpinning her hat, looked on at the game with interest. She gave a cry.

"Not time to get up yet," murmured Miss Connor.

"It's him!" repeated Winnie excitedly, in a lower tone to herself. "It is really! Knew I should run across him again."

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She decided, as young Lord marched out to the wickets (after borrowing half a pair of leg-pads from the last batsman), that if he made twenty, she would, cancelling previous resolutions, speak. After all, for this one day she was a lady, and any doubts he might have had concerning the truth of her statements would be dispelled. Besides, marriage was in the air. Why should she give up all thoughts of romance because a woman had selected Masters's a while before as the scene for illegal efforts? She wanted some day to be married as Miss Clements had been married, and there was no sense in evading opportunities. The game below proved one where everything that could be disputed was disputed, both sides lost no opportunity of appeal to the umpire, the wicket-keeper whipped off the bails whenever the ball came into his hands with a confident,

"How's that, then?"

At every hit, at least three men set out to recover the ball, and there generally ensued a struggle for the right to throw it in, the while batsmen snatched another run. If a ball went up, counsel from the fielders was given with such vigour and earnestness that the youth to whom the advice was shrieked generally lost his nerve, and had to endure the denunciations of the ten members of his side. Winnie found herself ranged with Arthur Lord in the contest, and when the ball was thrown in from one of his hits she screamed, ere it reached the wickets, "Not out!" and in other ways anticipated the decision of umpires. Long-on, being near to her during one tempestuous over, advised her to leave the management of the game to those engaged in it; she did not reply, but on a ball coming

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high in his direction, and his colleagues shouting "Catch, catch!" she remarked quietly, as long-on stood with open hands, waiting for the descent of the ball, "He'll muff it, he'll muff it, as sure as fate!" Long-on attributed his failure to her predictions, and declared violently that for two pins he would come and talk to her; she extracted these from the back of her sleeping companion's collar, and offered them, but long-on declined to pursue the conversation, and showed relief whenever he had to cross, coming back in the succeeding over with every sign of a grim determination to ignore her presence. She did not trouble about the score made by other batsmen who came and went, but the score of Arthur Lord she kept by plucking sprigs of grass, and there was satisfaction in discovering that he passed the limit fixed by her. Miss Connor slept through these exciting incidents, half opening her eyes now and again and ejaculating, "Sign, please."

"Run another, run another, run another!" cried Winnie.

Long-on, aiming at one set of wickets, knocked the bails off the other set, and the fielding side became delirious with excitement, demanding catches, jumping in the air, and throwing away collars. The batting side hurried out from the clump of trees where they had been resting to join in the conflict of voices. Winnie ran down to volunteer her opinion; Arthur Lord, recognising her, lifted his cap eagerly. The umpire, placing hands against ears to shut out the clamour, announced that since the young lady, who might be fairly taken as an unbiassed spectator, expressed the

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opinion that Arthur Lord was home ere the bails fell, he felt disposed to give the batsman the benefit of the doubt. The fielding side went back grumbling; Winnie returned. Presently came a triumphant shout of,

"Middle stump!" and the roar of triumph that announces the taking of a stubborn citadel.

The young man, coming over to Winnie, after transferring the leg-pad and receiving congratulations of his fellows, was met by a stern question; his explanation that he had been thinking of something else, when his thoughts should have been concentrated on the task of stopping a straight ball, extorted from her a contemptuous click of the tongue.

"Top score, at any rate, so far," he argued. "Look at that one. Out first try. A. E. Stoddart is the player I model myself on. Who's your lady friend that's playing nap?"

"She's one of the girls at our place. I'm in Masters's."

"Oh!"

"What do you mean by 'Oh'?" she demanded brusquely.

"When I say 'Oh' I mean 'Oh,'" he answered. After a pause. "What have you done to yourself?" He looked at her admiringly. "You've put your hair up and you've curled your fringe."

She laughed from sheer pleasure at his recognition of the change.

"What became of you that evening? That evening, I mean, when you arranged to meet me."

"I never promised."

"Did you forget all about me?" he asked anxiously.

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"Got more important subjects to occupy my mind," she replied. "There's been the wedding."

"Not yours!" he cried appealingly.

She fenced with the question for a while, and presently gave the facts. He took off his cap; she noted that his hair was thick and curly, and her manner became more amiable. She had really, she assured him, been very much occupied; he, as a mere railway clerk, could form no idea of the demand and the strain made during the sales; enough to make one willing to change places with a domestic servant, what with the worries endured in connection with folk who came to buy, but did not know what they wanted, and with women who knew what they wanted, but did not come to buy. On many a night in the sitting-room she had felt too tired and too exhausted to sit down at the pianoforte. There existed another reason, but with that she need not trouble him. A new and special shout came from the field below, and he started up.

"Hope they don't put me on to bowl," he said.

"Why?"

"Because seeing you," he bent down and whispered, "seeing you has upset me."

Impossible to avoid a sense of gratification, equally impossible to close one's eyes to the fact that white flannels suited him.

"Perhaps we'd better not meet again."

"Not meet again?" he cried. "You don't know what you're talking about. Of course we're going to meet again. I told you before that we were going to be friends, and so we are. There's my address. I don't want to bother you, but when you wish to see me

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you just send me a line. Not a postcard, and not to my home because I've got a sister."

"They're calling for you."

"Don't forget!" he begged imploringly.

She took her handkerchief and tied a knot in the corner.

Miss Connor, rubbing eyes and stretching arms, inquired the time; the reply justified anticipations. Something, she declared, told her it was just the hour for a cup of good strong tea. As they made their way back to the grounds of the hotel the two discussed the probable dulness of the evening after this full and satisfactory day; there would undoubtedly come a reaction with everyone in the worst of tempers. Sight of thin bread-and-butter and lettuce and samples of cake to suit all palates improved their spirits. R. O., seeing no opportunities for speech-making, had gone home to think out new ideas, leaving a gracious message to the effect that the evening could be occupied by the young ladies in any decorous manner that appealed to them, and they would not be expected at Fortess Road until eleven. Bonds of restraint thus removed, Miss Connor, by special request, gave her celebrated imitation of R. O. advancing down the centre of the shop to meet a lady with the reverence due to a prospective customer, and discovering that she had come to collect for Waifs and Strays; there followed a host of reminiscences from which one would have gained the impression that life at Masters's was one long, determined, persistent joke. Mr. Dray had an announcement to make which proved better than any joke. The married couple were leaving for Burnham Beeches by an evening

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train from Paddington, and it would be all on their way if the party came with them so far as Marylebone Road; he had re-visited most of the London sights, but he did not wish to have to reply in the negative when asked, on his return, whether he had been again to——

"Not Tussaud's," cried Winnie.

"Yes," said the bride. "Madame Tussaud's."

"We are going it," she remarked appreciatively.

"Don't be vulgar!" ordered Miss Ladbrook.

And now, the bride went on (in full enjoyment of dispensing hospitality), let them have their cups filled up, and give all their attention to a nice point. She and her husband had discussed the matter without coming to a decision. Was it to be the Princess's afterwards, or was it to be the Adelphi? They had but to choose, and Mr. Dray would send a messenger to reserve seats in the circle.

"I've never been to either," interposed Winnie.

"Nothing to do with you," said Miss Ladbrook. "The governor only referred to the young ladies."

"I'm younger than you are, and I'm as much of a lady."

Mr. Dray asked to be excused for interfering, but his view had been that Masters intended Winnie should be counted with the rest; if he were wrong in assuming this, the responsibility could be placed upon his shoulders. The others appealed to Miss Ladbrook to give way, and that young woman consented, premising, however, that the event should not establish a precedent, and quoting appositely from the Church Catechism.

At Marylebone Road, gained by the assistance of an

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omnibus from High Street to the end of Hampstead Road, and another omnibus going Paddington way, there could be no doubt that Winnie asserted and justified her inclusion in the party. Over an hour could be given to the exhibition, and Winnie's recommendation to the married couple was that too much time should not be given to Royalties and to gentlemen of note in the political world, but that the Chamber of Horrors should receive an early visit. There they found a model of a lady recently removed to another but probably not a better world, and in regard to her notable exploit, the girl was able to give the first word, the last word, and all the words intermediate. Miss Baker recollected several of the circumstances, Miss Connor knew the blind street near Camden Town Station where the affair had taken place, and Miss Ladbrook hinted that complete information was secreted somewhere in her brain; Winnie pushed them all aside, and recounted the particulars. An enthralled audience of visitors gathered around, saying—

"That's right."

"I'd forgot that bit."

"It's wonderful to be able to carry it all in your memory."

Winnie knew it by heart. How Mrs. Pearcey invited Mrs. Hogg and the baby to Priory Street for the purpose of taking tea; how Mrs. Pearcey killed both. How Mrs. Pearcey, thinking she had cleaned the place up admirably, made one blunder in placing a borrowed dress-stand out on the landing, and doing this with red-stained fingers. How counsel cross-examined witnesses, and gradually concentrated all the proofs, so

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that the jury had small hesitation in returning a verdict of guilty. Finally, how Mrs. Pearcey, after three weeks in Newgate, was in the presence of the authorities allowed to drop well down into the pit under the scaffold, and what Binns, the executioner, said afterwards. The point on which everyone agreed was that they felt glad their name was not Pearcey. To own a name associated with such a crime would be the greatest disaster that could happen. Those who possessed the name would do well to change it with all dispatch. Outside, in the good light of an August evening, all, slightly dazed, recovered sufficiently as Mr. Dray hailed a hansom (after telling them that Winnie was right in saying London was the only place fit to live in, and that he would certainly return one day) to give cheers and wishes for good luck, and, as the cab disappeared, a comment of,

"Poor dears!"

The orchestra started playing Irish airs, and the footlights went up at the very moment of their entry. They took seats in the front row, and to Miss Ladbrook's request that elbows should be taken from the cushioned ledge Winnie gave no reply; indeed, from that moment until the very end of the piece at a few minutes to eleven she scarcely shifted from this attitude, only removing a hand from the support of her chin in order, at tearful moments, to find a handkerchief. Some in the front row and many behind pretended at these crises to be suffering from a cold, and said later how silly and stupid and ridiculous it was to be touched by mere acting; these people on the stage were doing it night after night, and the only thing to create astonish-

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ment was that they did not become tired of doing it. The upper circle, unable to remember whether the train from Victoria went at twenty-three past or twenty-eight past, admitted, however, that it would be baffled by the task of committing words to memory. Miss Connor groaned when someone said, "You will have to suffer bitterly, indeed, for ages of family imprudence and the Irish extravagance of your ancestors;" approved when Arte O'Neal rejoined, "Yes, sir, the extravagance of their love for their country and the imprudence of their fidelity to their faith."

She and Winnie both laughed when Conn remarked of his mother that she was as proud of him as an ould hen that had got a duck for a chicken. They cheered uproariously, clapping hands and stamping heels in a manner more fitted (as Miss Ladbrook said) for the pit and gallery, when the constabulary seized Harvey Duff under the impression that he was Robert Ffolliott. Between the acts Miss Connor told Winnie of a village near Cork and of market days in Cork, and of an aunt of hers at Cork who kept a lodging-house in South Place, Cork.

"Seeing this, I s'pose, takes you back?" suggested Winnie.

"Wish to Heaven it did!" said Miss Connor fervently. "I'd sooner die in Ireland than live in London. I'd relish it more."

Wonderful and increasingly wonderful things happening later, with a good sprinkling of "begorras" and "acushlas" and "mavourneens," and at the fall of the curtain the full strength of the company crying "Hurroo! Hurroo!" equally delighted with



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the audience at the extraordinarily satisfactory termination.

"Don't want ever to enjoy myself," said Winnie at the end, as she pinned head-gear with the aid of a mirror, "any better than what I've done to-day. And that's straight."

"Your hat isn't," said the apprentice, making one of her rare efforts at conversation.

"Doesn't matter. Nothing matters."

"I never went through a day yet," said Miss Ladbrook gloomily, "but what something tiresome happened. Did you?"

"Me!" cried the girl cheerfully. "I haven't had a stroke of bad luck"—here she touched the wooden back of a seat—"since goodness knows when."

Each paid her own fare to the Bull and Gate, and the three, putting their heads together, discussed the question—Should Winnie be told? Was it right for her to know? Ought it to be kept from her or not? Arriving at a decision, Miss Ladbrook invited attention, first warning her against the sinfulness of pride, and the grave error of becoming puffed up merely on account of a chance phrase which, for all one knew, had been idly spoken. But the information to be communicated under all reserve and in strict confidence was this. R. O., before leaving that day, had said to them he felt surprise at finding Winnie so well able to behave herself; he added that with her quickness and alertness there was the possibility that her services might be of use in the shop. Precedent was to be ignored; the methods of the trade in regard to apprenticeship set aside. A pity she was not

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taller, but Mr. Masters, who knew the idea to be good because it had occurred to him, felt disinclined to wager his immortal soul that she might not grow.

"What do you think of that?" they demanded. "You'll be one of us. What do you say about it?"

"Dazzling prospect," she replied calmly; "but I'd just as soon keep in my own sphere. Still, it would be something to write and tell my brother Bert."

"And the rest of the family?"

"No," said Winnie, with a shiver. "Not the rest of the family."

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## CHAPTER IV

"Honour thy father . . . that thy days may be long in the land."

A TALL soldier of the 2nd Dragoon Guards, giving, as he clinked along Fortess Road, a flash of scarlet in every window, stopped at Masters's and looked sharply up at the name; a line of white-capped heads showed the way he had come. He fixed the strap under his chin, pulled at the tunic, flicked at his leg with his cane, took a handkerchief from sleeve, bending carefully removed a few specks of dust from boots, and entered.

"Yes, sir? What can we do for you, please?"

R. O. came, features ready to express with a single twist defensiveness or a hearty welcome. The soldier saluted, and R. O. held himself upright.

"Name of Garland, Miss." Still addressing the girl in black on the opposite side of the counter. She wore neat white cuffs and collar; her hair was brushed up at the back to the top of her head, where a scheme had been carried out on the lines of a teapot-holder. "G-a-r-l-a-n-d," he spelled.

"What about it?" she asked.

"Well," he replied, confused under her steady gaze, "I want to see her. Winnie Garland, the name is. G-a-r——"



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"Friends," interrupted R. O. precisely, "are not supposed to call during business hours. Or at any other time."

"I'm not her friend," protested the soldier. "I'm her brother."

"Can't you see her anywhere about?" asked the girl. "Have another squint at me!"

She introduced him to R. O., and the governor took him up towards the desk, to explain a scheme for the reduction of the Army Estimates. Winnie attended to some mature ladies, who wanted hats that would make them look young, but not too youthful; after seeing them upon her head, they decided presently to purchase. Meanwhile she heard her brother's deep voice and R. O.'s high voice contesting; R. O. urging the soldier not to be afraid of other European Powers, and the soldier declaring that he could eat Russia for breakfast, and take Germany as an eleven-o'clock snack; she swelled with pride to discover that here was someone who could meet R. O. on grounds of argument and stand up to him valiantly. Too often, discussions on Imperial subjects were conducted with commercials, who did not venture to disagree for long; generally they put up some feeble contention made of straw, permitting R. O. to knock it over, and expressing sycophantic wonder at the performance. "Now, what is your answer to that?" she heard R. O. say triumphantly, after a heavy fire of statistics. "My answer to that," said her brother, "is that you haven't the least sort of idea what you're precious well talking about."

They came down presently, the soldier regretting the absence of his chum Wallis, a man of whom it was not

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too much to say that he could talk a donkey's hind leg off; if ever he found himself able to call at Fortess Road again he would bring Wallis along, and then a good match could be seen. The contestants shook hands in the friendliest manner as the young women cleared the counters for early afternoon closing, and the brown blinds came down.

"In twenty minutes, Bert. Outside."

"Right you are! Make it less if you can. I've got lots and lots to tell you."

"I've a good deal to tell you."

"Afternoon, sir. Afternoon, ladies," said Private Garland.

"Good-afternoon," they said precisely.

Miss Ladbrook asked why the brother did not buy a commission and become an officer; Winnie replied that there were family reasons. Miss Ladbrook put a further question to Winnie, and on receiving the answer, "Engaged eighteen deep," said that the next time Miss Garland wished to borrow a fur boa she could make an appeal in some other direction. Winnie called imperatively to the kitchen for her brown shoes, and ran upstairs two steps at a time to change.

"The news I've got for you," he said, "is Bermondsey news." She gave an apprehensive ejaculation; he lowered his voice. "Come to me in a roundabout way, through a chap whose people live at Horselydown. Edward's gone."

"If only the whole lot of them——" she began wildly. She stopped. "Mustn't say that, though. There's father. When I've saved enough I've got an idea of arranging something for father. I've got a theory, or whatever

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you like to call it, that if we could only get father away from Bermondsey he'd be all right."

"Do they know you're here?"

"Hope not!"

"'Pon my word," he cried, setting his cap at the correct angle, "it's a marvellous clumsy arrangement when you come to think of it. Here's us two wanting to do what's right and proper, anxious to get on in the world, and having to actually go away and hide ourselves in order to do it. I've a dashed good mind," he cried desperately, "to go now and defy the whole lot of 'em."

"Best keep away."

"You may be right," he conceded. "But, mind you, apart from father there isn't one of them that's got any moral or legal claim on us. You understand that, Winnie. I admit, though, I should like to get a glimpse of the old man. And that's a solid fact!"

"Let's go down there and see him," she cried suddenly.

In Seymour Street they noted Arthur Lord looking out of the office doors; she fluttered with recognition of the magnetic force that she was able to exercise, for he turned his head directly she gazed in his direction.

Arthur Lord became so much perturbed on catching sight of the soldier that Winnie felt compelled to stop and make a formal introduction, if only for the sake of restoring colour to his features; he brightened at once and produced his cigarette-case. Conversation began in admirable vein; it would have been more successful if each had talked of his own affairs instead of showing

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courtesy by discussing on the part of Arthur Lord the Army; on the part of her brother Bert, railways. Each accepted the other's blunders with patience, Lord cancelling hastily a suggestion of remodelling the Army on foreign methods, and Bert admitting, in regard to his proposal concerning State management of railways, that he had not had time or opportunity to study the matter with thoroughness. Arthur Lord turned to Winnie. He had had an increase of three shillings at Euston; this brought him up to twenty-one shillings a week, or, to use more important figures, say £55 a year, besides overtime. Tempted to send her the glad information, he had been checked by the knowledge that she did not care to be bothered with communications from him; she protested that he could write as often as he pleased, but Arthur Lord said that in the Down Parcels Department the idea was that if you wrote to a station and received no answer, and if two or three repeated letter forms, couched in increasing terms of appeal, failed to elicit a reply, then the matter was referred to headquarters. Winnie promised that the next letter received by her should have prompt attention, and Arthur Lord, for fear lest he might forget to give particulars later, handed to her a card bearing his private address. He mentioned that he and his sister had joined a gymnasium. Winnie ought to meet his sister. The two said they must be hurrying on.

"Very pleased to meet you, sir," said Arthur Lord.

"Pleasure's mine," declared Bert.

Bert, who knew most things, could give all particulars

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desired, and on the way he did give them; for young people, he said, who had not stopped growing there was nothing to be compared with gymnastics. She asked how it would affect those who appeared never to have started growing, and he said that he would guarantee that, within certain bounds, it did no harm. On Winnie expressing regret that these advantages were open to the rich only, he assured her there were institutions for girls all over town, at moderate fees, and a few inquiries only were needed to discover them. She, in return, gave confidential particulars in regard to the new life, beginning with the statement that it was not all lavender. R. O. could on occasion break out into foolishly autocratic methods, and the customers at times—Oh, the customers!

"No use telling you," she said hopelessly. "You'd never believe it. I suppose they've most of 'em been trod on in their time; that's the only way I can account for it. And whatever they like to say to you, you must never think of giving back answers."

"Don't you worry yourself about trifles," advised her soldier brother, "so long as you've got health and strength."

"That's just it," she cried. "I'd nearly forgot to mention that. There's a bit to be made in premiums on the odd basket, and there's roast joint beef on Sundays and boiled leg of mutton on Thursdays, but I don't feel nearly so well as what I did. I get tired standing about all day,—there isn't a decent-looking foot in the shop, excepting mine,—and by the time night comes I'm so done I can't sleep. And instead of being in a little room by myself, I have to share one, and

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Miss Baker snores, and I've got a chilblain coming on the tip of my ear."

"If you're not happy where you are," he said judicially, "why not simply go back to where you was happy?"

"And get laughed at more than ever."

"Then try to get another berth of a similar kind somewhere else."

"They wouldn't have me. I should have to serve an apprenticeship."

"Then stay where you are," he counselled.

She pinched her under-lip. "I suppose," she said thoughtfully, "I suppose that's the only thing to be done."

She booked to Spa Road, third returns, and in the train the task of explaining to travellers, new to the line, why it was necessary to cross the river twice engaged her mind and her efforts; the other passengers seemed to make an honest effort to understand, but gave it up despairingly at London Bridge, saying that they could only suppose the Company knew best. Also, at London Bridge, Bert and Winnie expelled a lady who wanted to go to Lewisham, and had therefore no right to a place in a Greenwich train, and they alighted at Spa Road with the satisfaction of having done good, useful, public work.

Near the ticket collector's stool downstairs, she ordered her brother to wait, and borrowing from the official a stump of lead pencil, took Lord's card from her pocket, and placing it against the wall, wrote a name and address, adding a few words. Outside, near the arches, she found two boys playing on the chalked-out

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pavement the game of London, and selecting the more intelligent-looking, entrusted him with a task which, successfully carried out, would enrich him to the extent of three halfpence.

"Listen, Bert," she said, when this was done. "You stand here talking to this railway man, and when father comes, I'll keep him outside the door, so that you can see him. Don't you come forward and interfere, or else you'll give the whole show away. If he's at home, he'll be here in ten minutes."

"Never knew him to move himself quite so fast as all that."

"If anything makes him bustle," she remarked, "it will be the chance of making a bit out of me." She looked inside her purse. "Shan't give him more than a shilling. Can't afford it, for one thing."

The messenger returned at that moment, announcing breathlessly that he had fulfilled his commission, and asking where was his three halfpence; Winnie replied that her acquaintance with Bermondsey children dated before that evening, and the sum would not be paid until the recipient of the message arrived. The boy deplored this lack of faith, and finding the card in his pocket, set out again. She walked up and down. Presently the boy returned, dragging with him a man wearing a bowler hat that came well down on the ears, and a suit made up of garments but distantly related to each other. The frock coat appeared to be the least recent purchase.

"Now are you satisfied, Miss?" demanded the boy, in injured tones.

"How are you, Winnie, my gel? You've altered."

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"Wish I could say the same of you, father." She kissed him on his bristled cheek. "Careless about your appearance as ever."

"People know me."

"They won't care to if you don't smarten yourself up. Whatever would Bert think if he could see you now?"

"Do you hear anything of Bert?" her father asked. "I don't reckon he's treating me quite as a son ought to treat his only remaining parent. The day after his poor mother was put away, and whilst I was sleeping it off a bit—nice funeral we gave her; they still talk about it—off he went, and I've never 'eard from him since."

"You never will."

"Oh!" he remarked casually, fixing a button of his elderly coat into a wrong hole. "So Bert's gone, has he? Ah, well, I 'ope he's gone to the right place; that's the worst I wish him. Perhaps it accounts for him not sending his old father a Post Office order. If I'd only welted him more when he was a boy!"

Private Garland left the ticket collector's stool and was coming forward; Winnie gave a private gesture of the hand, ordering him to return. "You might have sent more often, my gel," the father whined. "You know what the Bible says."

"I'd like to lose my temper with you," she said, "but I can't. We decided to come down——"

"Who's we?"

The remark necessitated a good deal of explanation; her father said he did not quite like seeing her so well dressed, and warned her to be very careful of her

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good name. A porter came with a broom, and they had to move; the interruption enabled her to arrest the reply that she was about to make. She asked concerning relatives; two of them, it appeared, were looking around; another was under remand, another was in Guy's, and yet another had some thoughts of coming out of the workhouse.

"And Kate?"

The scrubby features lighted up at the mention of this name, and the girl frowned at his enthusiasm. In Kate, daughter by his first wife, was found, it appeared, a child who could be fairly and correctly called a dutiful child. Kate did not vanish from sight and give her father no information concerning her address; Kate had more than once driven up in a cab so near to West Lane as the hansom cared to come; not staying long certainly, but leaving on the table silver that brought the entire family together and ensured a pleasant and a successful evening. Kate was now in a public-house, fully licensed, Westminster Bridge Road way, and on one occasion Jim—was Jim remembered? Very well, then!—Jim had smartened himself up and had gone right over there, entering the private bar without giving to Kate any sign of recognition, but comporting himself as a stranger and calling for a cigar and a three of Scotch; the change handed to him out of a shilling exceeded his highest expectations. Members of the family bustled over the next day, but either because the landlord's wife looked on, or because Kate meant to favour her brother Jim to the exclusion of all others, the results were disappointing, and Jim himself, on a second and third essay, only received his correct

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change. The one instance was, however, enough to show that Kate possessed a generous disposition, and proved that she recognised, as some did not, the claims of the family.

"Five years," said Winnie vehemently. "That's what they all ought to get. Five years. Every one of them. If I could only see the lot of them put away for five years I should feel relieved."

"You ought to be sorry to say a thing like that."

"I am sorry," she retorted. "I'm sorry for you, father. I'm sorry for the others, and I'm especially sorry for myself. I want to keep myself decent, and to make some good friends, and to get on in the world; and I can tell you, it's taking me all my time."

"What are you earning now, my gel? And where are you working?"

"Shan't tell you! Wouldn't tell you if I was on the rack. I'm never going to let a single one of you know. If I did, I know very well what would happen. It's only by keeping clear of the whole lot that I can help you."

"This side of the river or the other?"

"I feel very often as though I want a sight of you, father; but for the rest—— I tell you what my idea is. You're not so bad as the others. Why don't you do as Bert and me did, and cut yourself adrift?"

"Do what?"

"You're somewhat out of practice; but there's a lot of work in you yet. I can remember when you earned good money in a barber's shop. It's only because

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you're mixed up with a lot of lazy good-for-nothings that you don't set to and do something."

He put both hands to his bowler hat, and wrenching it off, suggested, as he swung it, that there was no particular hurry.

"Not for you," she replied swiftly. "You've never been in a hurry all your life, excepting when a copper was after you. But if I'm going to do any good to myself it's very certain that I can't afford to dawdle. And look here, father! You refuse to do as I ask you, and I shall simply make up my mind to go away. Right away."

"I've often wondered," he said, with a clumsy attempt at reasonableness, "I've often wondered, Winnie, that you haven't."

"You're a rare old muddle-head," she remarked, looking at him critically. "Goodness only knows why I take trouble over you."

"Didn't you promise your poor mother?"

"If I give you a shilling, I suppose you'll go and spend it on drink?"

He made such earnest and fearsome promises to abstain that the porter, having finished the task of sweeping, threatened if there was much more of it to bang him over the head with the broom. Winnie resented this interference, and routed the porter. The incident caused her to speak to her father with greater friendliness.

"I shall send for you," she said. "I shall send a note, and you can meet me somewhere and have another talk. Not a word to the others, mind."

"Is it likely?"

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"Yes," said Winnie. "Good-bye. Be as good as you can."

He returned her kiss, and was following her into the booking-office, but she barred the way.

"Excuse me mentioning it," he said, twisting his hat; "but wasn't there some talk about a bob?"

She waited inside, and through the window saw him shuffle along; at the Spa Tavern he gave his shoulder to the door, with the manner of one accustomed to the task. She turned and went to her brother with an eager question. Supposing Bert ever became engaged, how would he manage when the other party suggested an introduction to his family? Private Garland, of the 2nd Dragoon Guards, replied that, being in full possession of all his senses, he never would think of becoming engaged.

"Dear big brother!" she said affectionately.

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## CHAPTER V

"Come away to the garden of England,
Come away to the cherry and rose."

ANOTHER girl came from the unexhausted registry office, a heavy, lymphatic young person, with eyes like cups and saucers, and never able to prevent her apparel from yawning; the news-distributing maid next door having left to better herself—which, indeed, seemed a step too long delayed—Winnie was able to treat the newest girl from the altitude adopted by Miss Ladbrook and Miss Connor and Miss Baker, with, perhaps, rather more of aloofness than these young women exhibited. Miss Ladbrook, to others, showed a new and welcome geniality, for she had secured the affections of a gentleman—not young, explained Miss Ladbrook, but youngish—who lived Cricklewood way, and if all went well there seemed good prospect of another wedding. Mr. Furley was a traveller, and a considerable attraction about him as a husband consisted in the fact that he would be absent from Monday morning until Friday night. Perhaps the most interesting item of information conveyed at this period was that Miss Ladbrook at Winnie's age had been of Winnie's height; she had suddenly shot up, reaching the adequate and reasonable inches now



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possessed. Winnie found advice in a column of a ladies' journal, and carried out amazing exercises each evening, giving Miss Baker, the silent apprentice, excuse for referring to an aunt of hers now at Hanwell; these were practised also in the morning, and preluded the duty of lifting heavy rolls (that, in her dreams, were always falling upon her and giving her a pancake shape), the tasks of arithmetic that caused her head to ache, the shivering in the wild draughts which from Highgate and Muswell Hill came swirling down. R. O. welcomed the draughts as reminding him of Polwhelli; he spoke of them under the name of ventilation. R. O. had strenuous views concerning hygiene and diet; watercress was provided one day in the year for the purification of blood, and to a lady customer from Regent's Park, who recommended that folding seats should be provided for the assistants, he proved so conclusively that they would be responsible for hunched backs and rounded shoulders that the well-intentioned customer begged leave to withdraw the amendment, and, bowing, left the shop hurriedly, to find herself pursued by R. O., armed with a full quiver of further arguments; she effected an escape only by taking a tramcar for a direction in which she had no desire to travel. A habit of Winnie's at this time caused an addition to be posted up on the list of never-inflicted penalties near the stairs at the back of the shop. "Any Assistant found Reading Advertisements in Newspapers will be fined three halfpence."

Despite rules, the young women, in intervals of work, and when R. O. was boxed up at the desk wrestling with accounts, encouraged themselves by talk of a

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dance to come, or a party in the future, or a concert not too remote; sometimes when anticipations could not be enjoyed, they had to fall back on retrospection, and here Winnie was able with à slight effort of an imaginative mind, to cap the highest and the brightest of personal experiences. It came as an unexpected reminder that truth could, on occasion, be as strange as fiction, when a partially printed card arrived from Miss Enefer, communicating an invitation; the young ladies told her the meaning of R.S.V.P., and contributed, for the evening, silver ornaments and other useful and decorative articles.

"Supported by voluntary contributions," quoted Winnie delightedly. "Smallest donations thankfully received. Urgent cases treated at once."

The good-natured efforts of the syndicate were certainly successful, and the new servant, on watching the departure on the evening, only just managed to retain possession of her eyes; Winnie feared she might appear over-dressed, but Mrs. Masters reassured her, stating that she wished she felt as well as Winnie looked, adding a candid opinion that the girl paid for a little attention. On seeing near the fruit-shop in Castle Road four young women alight from a hansom, to the intense relief of the horse who looked round and counted them, she felt willing to admit that Mrs. Masters had reason on her side. Clearly, the Enefers, when they did give a party, gave a good one. An imported maid opened the side door, saying, "Ladies' cloakroom upstairs, gentlemen leave their hats and coats in the passage," in the way of one already tiring of a repeated recitation.

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"Glad to see you, my dear," remarked Mrs. Enefer, "and that's more than I've been able to say to some. Why don't you come round more often? Too much occupied with young men, I suppose?"

"Never give them a moment's thought."

"That's unusual," said the hostess. "Look after yourself as well as you can and don't bother me."

Mr. Chapman, in a suit near to evening dress and including some of the garments of daylight hours, so that it looked like an effort to conciliate all views, came forward, making his way through a circle of young women, and claimed acquaintance with an airy grace.

"A mixed lot," said Chapman, looking around disparagingly. "Wouldn't have taken so much trouble if I'd known what they were going to be like."

"Bit of a trial for a chap like you."

"It is," he said eagerly. "I believe, though, her uncle's coming. He's a chef, you know. Chef at an hotel. You're pretty well connected, aren't you? I remember some of your conversation that first evening up in Waterlow Park. Time goes on," added Mr. Chapman, with a frown of age.

"Mr. Lord going to be here to-night?"

Chapman's roar to the ceiling came at a moment when silence held temporary possession of the room, and the other guests looked around scandalised.

"Must tell you presently," he whispered. "Biggest joke I ever come across in the whole course of my existence. The very largest."

Several retorts came to her mind, but the fear of a surprised raising of eyebrows from others arrested her,

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and, leaving him abruptly, she crossed the room and sat down on a rout seat against the wall. She blamed herself for the annoyance she felt on hearing Arthur Lord ridiculed, but one thing seemed clear and certain: he was worth all the young men in this room put together. Better looking, better mannered, better disposed. As for the ladies, they showed the limp wrist of refinement and talked with a tired vivacity that astonished Winnie. Miss Enefer came to her and offered to effect introductions; Winnie replied that she did not greatly mind being left alone, and Miss Enefer with "Oh, very well, please yourself!" turned to other duties. The girl, looking around, endeavoured to discover what was wrong with the guests. It occurred to her presently that the defect was that, Mrs. Enefer alone excepted, they imitated someone else. Winnie flushed at the thought that she too might have made herself appear ridiculous in the past by playing the game of pretending; it was enough to make one promise to be frank and genuine in future. Nevertheless, she flattered herself that she could not possibly be so amateurish as these, and the four girls near the window who were trying in affected tones to decide when the Queen held the last Drawing-room inspired her with undisguised contempt. Mrs. Enefer brought over a brother-in-law, a cheerful, bald little man, who sat beside her on the rout seat, and apropos of recent rains, congratulated himself on the fact that the more depressing the weather the more anxious people were to eat. Four big dinners on that evening, and he had nearly lost his voice ordering people about;

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he questioned whether it would be possible for him to sing "Nancy Lee" when presently summoned.

"Tell you what I like about my work," said the cheerful little man, "it's full of difficulties. That's what I enjoy about it. I drive down to the hotel, and before I'm downstairs there's half a dozen problems thrown at me, and" with relish "I clear them all up. They can't beat me. I grapple with them, and beat them. You try me now! Tell me the hardest nut you've got to crack, and see whether my teeth are any good at it."

Winnie thought before speaking.

"Supposing," she said slowly, "supposing that you knew somebody that, in a way, you were rather fond of, and you wanted to get him away from London, where would you send him? It's worrying me a good deal. I look through the advertisement columns, but they don't seem to help."

"What age?"

"Over fifty."

The chef gave a whistle, descending the scale to intimate regret.

"Bit too advanced to send abroad."

"Abroad's out of the question," she said promptly. "I couldn't afford it. I don't mind emptying my Savings Bank book, but I'm not going to run into debt. Besides, he mustn't go far out of my sight." She watched anxiously as he rubbed hard at the top of his head.

"I have it!" he cried, bringing the hand down on his knee. Two young women, after some quarrelling, had started a duet on the pianoforte; they stopped

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and declared reproachfully that he had put them out. The room begged them to have another try, and recalled an encouraging proverb. "I have it," he repeated more quietly. "Down just below Tonbridge."

"Well?"

"Got a couple of cottages there," explained the old gentleman, "and one of them will be free next month. There's some few sticks of furniture in it; nothing very special, but good enough, and I shouldn't charge anything for the use of them. Can he cut hair by any chance?"

"He did have a turn at it once. Amongst other things."

"Signed, sealed, and settled," said the old gentleman heartily. "What did I tell you just now? Don't you think I'm a perfect marvel?"

"About terms."

"The last lot paid three and six a week."

"Three and six? For rent of a house?"

"Well," he said, "we'll make it three shillings."

"Mean to tell me," asked Winnie, "that they don't know more down in the country than to charge a trifling sum like that?"

Mrs. Enefer admitted later that whilst Winnie had at first given no assistance to the party, once her young friend began to liven up and take an interest in the proceedings, no doubt existed in regard to the success. Winnie herself divided the credit between the uncle and the hand-round supper. When one young couple, very much in love, and obviously inconmoded by the presence of others, had said they thought they must see about going (this at twenty

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past nine), and supper was hurried in to stave off the execution of this threat; when later plates and tumblers had been returned, and the couple, after exchanging another affectionate glance, said that now they must really be off, then, although Mrs. Enefer was in favour of allowing them to go, together with any others who did not care to stay, her daughter went about imploring everybody to do something, and begging them to do it at once. The old chef conferred with his young neighbour. Mrs. Enefer told her son to sit upright, and not to fidget with his necktie.

"We're going out on the landing," the uncle announced, "and we're coming back to act what used to be called, in my young day, a charade. What you've got to do is to guess the syllables of the word. Come on, missy. At one time I was reckoned rather good at this."

"No flirting, uncle," said Miss Enefer.

"Wish we could have sent him abroad," said the old chef, outside, ruminating. "Had a similar case once with a cousin. No use at all, he wasn't. Not worth locking up. And I sent him away to one of the Colonies, and, bless my soul, if he isn't a bigger man now than what I am."

"Can't tell you what a relief it is to me," she declared thankfully, "to get a word of advice from someone like you. I'm so used to fighting for myself that it seems strange."

The others called from the room, asking how much longer they were likely to be. He whispered a word, and they went in.

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The delighted room when eventually told the complete word said, "Of course, of course!" and begged urgently that the two should do another. The old gentleman was ready, but Winnie decided not to imperil the success already gained, and Mr. Chapman and Miss Enefer undertook charge of the next performance. The new effort did not command universal approbation, partly because in the first syllable the two came out of the picture, as it were, and had a spirited wrangle, the lady arguing that the word selected was Temperance; Mr. Chapman asserting that he had rejected this as unmanageable, and had chosen the word Lemonade, as being more fitted to his histrionic powers. Resuming his seat against the wall, he said that Miss Enefer could play the blessed thing herself, she could get someone else to jolly well take his place, or, as a third alternative, the whole business could be dropped; he made it clear that no further help was to be expected from him. The uncle and Winnie consented to play another three-act piece based on the word "Matrimony," which the room, to its great satisfaction, guessed.

"I'm off!" said Winnie, glancing at her watch. "Good-bye, Mrs. Enefer, thanks for a pleasant evening; good-bye all."

"As I say," remarked the chef, finding his hat and coat and going downstairs, "I'm a bachelor, and I don't mean no harm to anybody, and if I can help you, I will."

"You're a dear," she cried earnestly. "If you were a bit older I'd hug you."

"Long time since anybody talked of doing that. What are you after, my lad?"

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"Escort!" Young Enefer, silent during the evening, spoke now for the first time.

"I'm sure you'll both excuse me," interrupted Winnie, "but there's a friend of mine across the way with a patch over one eye. And if you don't mind I'll walk along with him."

"Mornington Crescent. Number 77, off Hampstead Road. You know. Can't possibly forget it; two sevens. Drop me a line. I'll do the best I can. Come along, Moltke, my lad," jovially to the doubtful young man. "You can see me home instead; the wet won't hurt you. Did you hear what I said to him, missie? I says, 'You can see me home instead,' I says. Not bad, was it?"

Arthur Lord was reading the placards of evening newspapers at a shop, and her light footsteps failed to arouse him; she waited to enjoy the luxury of contemplating him. He carried two umbrellas, which gave him the appearance of a courtly knight who had set out with the determination of saving his lady from the rain; one arm rested in a sling, and this accentuated the appearance of having already gone through the wars; he only needed a suit of shining armour and a white steed champing in the roadway, and a page-boy holding the bridle, and the picture would have been complete. Over the way at Mrs. Enefer's voices sang "Auld Lang Syne," shadows on the blinds bobbed arms up and down; the girl detected a compliment in the fact that the party had terminated immediately after her departure. She gave a whistle and he swung around.

"Such a jolly evening!" she cried animatedly. "Wish

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you'd been there. What have you been doing to yourself? Look as though you're selling off, owing to the premises coming down. Carry my parcel, will you, it's only got Miss Connor's slippers. Don't you think I look a rare swell?"

He gave a flattering gesture of amazement with his free hand, and, as they walked, she chattered. Not a trouble left in the world, she declared; everything seemed to be shaping well, and it had all happened so suddenly that she was half afraid to pinch herself. At first she had made up her mind that the evening was going to be dull; his absence might have had something to do with that. But would he please observe how marvellously well events directed themselves, when in a favourable mood? If he had been there the probability was that the two of them would have been together for the greater part of the evening, in which case she would have had no chance of this most satisfactory talk with the old gentleman; it made one tremble to think of the chances and risks of life. She gave every word of the conversation, occasionally going back if something happened to be omitted, and so far as her excellent memory served sparing him nothing. They were at Masters's before they knew it, and it was a proud girl who stood there at the side door talking, in confidential tones, to her companion, with one hand upon the bell-knob.

"Well," she said presently, "I must be getting in. I'm keeping the new girl up. Oh, such a dollop she is; I wish there was time to tell you about her. Good-night. Thanks for coming to meet me." Catching sight of the new moon, she curtsied three times.

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"Did I ask you," she went on, preparing to pull the knob, "what mischief you'd been getting into?"

"Merely a slight accident," he replied. "Nothing to make a fuss about."

"But you must be more careful," counselled the girl in a matronly way. "By the bye, I'm going to join that gymnasium your sister goes to. I've got all the particulars. You'll have to look out for yourself once I begin to put on muscle. How did it happen?"

"Tell you some other time."

"Tell me now!" with a stamp of the heel. "It's something you're ashamed of."

He assured her his arm was coming out of the sling on the morrow, and in a few days the shining yellow patch would come from his eye. The affair might well have been more unfortunate; his right arm might have been injured, and both of his eyes might have suffered. Still it was, to a certain extent, inconvenient; and down at Euston they were an incredulous lot, ready to find in anything subject for mordant chaff. He had not intended to burden her, but he could scarcely allow her to go with the suspicion that he had been mixed up in some discreditable event. Here were the facts.

He was returning from an assault-at-arms that had been given at Junction Hall, and outside the house where his people lived selected from the bunch his latchkey; he pulled out now the chain attached to a brace button in order to illustrate the movement. A man not so very much older than himself, but heavier, gave him a sharp tap on the shoulder, causing him to drop the bunch. "Name of Arthur Lord, Esquire?" he asked. "That's me," was the reply. "This your

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address?" exhibiting a card. "That's my address." The heavy man, inviting all of Arthur Lord's attention, took credit to himself for never being one disposed to beat about the bush, and at once demanded the whereabouts of Winnie Garland. Arthur Lord, not favourably impressed by the appearance or the manner of the questioner, made reply that he would see him hanged first, and the other seemed to take this to have a special and particular meaning, for he at once sent out his right fist. Arthur Lord, recovering, managed after a feint or two to bring his left up underneath the other's jaw; whereupon the man suggested an armistice for the purpose of talking the matter over. They did talk the matter over, but with no result excepting that folk opened windows on first floors and a constable appeared at the end of the road.

"Wasn't sorry to see him," admitted Lord candidly.

Whereupon the man said, "Will you or won't you?" and on Arthur Lord answering promptly, "I won't," the man gave him a blow on the arm, and, with threats so phrased that it was impossible to repeat them to Winnie, vanished. Arthur Lord staggered indoors, where his mother caught him, and his sister told him he was a disgrace. That was all about it, and Winnie was not to worry herself; for, as he had already hinted, a few days would see him as right as ninepence, as right as one o'clock, as right as the Bank of England.

"You poor dear!" she cried. "Do you know who that was? That was one of my half-brothers; not the right brother you met when he was up from Shorncliffe,

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but one of the wrong ones. And it was my fault he got your address. And now, I suppose," defiantly, "you don't want to see me again?"

He protested the suggestion gave him more hurt than anything which had gone before; if she began to talk in this way he should have to despair of ever succeeding in making himself understood by her. Could she not perceive that this incident brought him into the scheme, as it were; that, having been wrongly debited with a to-pay entry, he had a good right to recharge it as a paid-on? What Winnie had to do now was to allow him to fight on her side and help to baffle and confound and disperse her opponents; he asked for nothing better. There was, for instance, this idea of getting father down into the country. It would not be easy for Winnie to take him down to the village, but no earthly reason existed why he, Arthur Lord, with a day of his holidays for the past year still due to him, should not take charge of the task and carry it out in a business-like and satisfactory way.

"Sorry you got knocked about, though. He'd do the same to me, if he had the chance."

"He shan't have the chance," declared Arthur Lord stoutly, "if I can help it."

"Poor arm!" she said, stroking it compassionately.

"Do you think, under the circumstances, I might have the pleasure of——"

She offered the left side of her face. "You needn't ever ask," she remarked.

A letter came from the old chef, announcing that the cottage was ready. A letter came from her father to the care of Arthur Lord, stating his readi-

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ness to go. A letter came from Arthur Lord, informing his dear Winnie, on an official memorandum headed London and North Western Railway, and with a small square at the side, framed, with the words, "Refer hereto in your reply," that nearly everything was arranged; he had to meet her father at London Bridge Station on a day to be appointed, take him down by an afternoon train, and see him carefully delivered at the destination; there were two convenient trains back; one leaving at 5.46, and another at 6.25, and one of these he would catch. He sent his love, and begged to remain her loving sweetheart.

. . . . . .

Mrs. Masters had begun to wilt; the doctor said that a few months of her native air might pull her together again; might not have that result, a double prophecy which did not lend itself to contradiction. R. O. wept aloud and confessed his wife had been something more than his right hand in the affairs of the shop, and that the many steps of importance which had been unsuccessful were to be blamed to him. The young ladies listened with a proper attitude of commiseration to his wailings, and gave sympathy when Mrs. R. O. and the baby went off in a four-wheeler.

Pending the arrival of some distant relative from Merionethshire, Winnie was selected in this emergency to supervise the domestic side of the establishment. She at once began to exercise such terrific powers of command that the servant girl rose at hours previously unheard of, prepared breakfast so early that by the time the ladies came down the tea

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had become cold and the bread stale; was ready to change ere midday, and found herself at two o'clock in the afternoon with, so far as she could perceive, nothing to do. On this point Winnie, making surprise visits from the shop, amended the girl's views.

You can believe it was an important young woman who, on her way to the gymnasium (where in a dark blue short-skirted costume she imperilled life at the bidding of a dogmatic woman called Fraulein), called at the registry office and talked to the proprietress with a view of obtaining a satisfactory girl with all the virtues; willing, honest, strong, and hard-working. The office not being the one from which Winnie herself had been obtained, this gave a greater freedom to conversation; the two spoke regretfully of the fact that servants showed increased desire to sleep out, paying only casual visits by day, arriving at an hour that varied, and leaving at a rigidly fixed moment. Winnie had in her mind a big girl from the country, wanting in the artfulness that one found in the London-bred and possessing a desire to learn; the proprietress of the registry-shop retorted that it was easy to talk, and that if Winnie found such a sample or pattern or specimen, she for her part felt willing to order a gross of these, with the certainty of immediately obtaining for the hundred and forty-four admirable situations without going outside the limits of Tufnell Park. Winnie, taking an impartial attitude, expressed the view that for the apparent deadlock the registry offices were responsible, and the woman said desperately,

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"That's right! Go on! Fire away! Blame everybody but yourself!"

Partially reconciled to counter work by the enjoyment of powers on the domestic side of the establishment, and a good right of entry to the kitchen, she shared with greater appetite discussion with customers on the one subject that held the customers' mind, even when the task of matching a shade or changing the embellishments of a hat took prominent place. Mrs. Shorley, of Torriano Avenue, kept two—or failed to do so—and she found Winnie so sympathetic in regard to her disasters that, if Winnie happened to be engaged, she waited, declining the offers of the others, and treating R. O.'s efforts at small talk with unconcealed disdain. Mrs. Shorley begged and implored and entreated Winnie to keep on her behalf a good look-out, promising an indefinite reward if she found some one or some two who could appreciate a good home, and a mistress whose solitary failing was that of excessive kindness. Winnie replied that good servants did not grow upon every tree; Mrs. Shorley declared with a moan that few who knew the forests were so well acquainted with the fact as herself, and this received corroboration by the circumstance that when she endeavoured to recall some conspicuous failure she had to search through a perfect thicket for the name, referring to the disastrous person as Maud, Ellen, Elizabeth, Rose, Caroline, Gertrude, Jane—that was to say, Emily.

From Arthur Lord came one afternoon a note which had the effect of clearing away the last suggestion of worry.



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"I am glad to be able to inform you that I took your father down by the two-fifty train yesterday from London Bridge, meeting him there, as appointed, and recognising him close to the booking-office by the aid of the photograph you kindly lent me. He seemed very friendly and agreeable, but I got him past the refreshment-room at last. In the train he began to talk again after we came out of the tunnel at Chislehurst, and spoke of you and Bert, and said how different his second family was from the first. He also talked about your mother, and said that if she had been alive he would not have had to leave London, she being always capable of earning a living by hard work. He said you resembled her.

"We alighted in due course, and I took him over the bridge and down the principal road of the village. He seemed very pleased with everything, and especially praised the outside appearance of the White Horse, but I remembered what you told me.

"The cottage is small, there is a garden at the back, and Miss Enefer's uncle has made very good arrangements with the woman next door. I gave your father a straight talking to in accordance with your request, pointing out to him that he had now the chance of a lifetime, that he could break away from his Bermondsey relatives and associates, and so forth and so on. I also told him he ought to be ashamed of having given you so much trouble in the past, but that good behaviour on his side in the future would enable you to forget it all. I had taken a card down with me, Shaving and Hairdressing, and I placed this in the window, and I gave him the razors and the scissors and the brushes and

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combs; he took off his coat, and said, 'Now we shan't be long!' I then presented him with the half-sovereign that you had promised him, and he thanked me very heartily, and walked up with me to the station. I caught the five forty-six, and as the train went out he waved his hat and called out asking me to come down in the spring and see how he was getting on.

"Now I must conclude, hoping to see you very soon, and trusting that I have done everything satisfactorily. We are very busy with some special traffic, or I would write more.—Yours, always, A. L."

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## CHAPTER VI

"Battle raged considerable time neither side claim victory."—*War Correspondent's compressed telegram*

"YOU mustn't hum," said Miss Ladbrook, in shocked tones. "It does look so bad in business hours."

"But what's to be done when you feel jolly?"

"Repress yourself," answered the senior assistant. "Just the same as when you're in the dumps, you've got to pretend in the drapery that you're good-tempered. Afraid you don't realise what the proper shop manner is. Clear your counter, please."

"Just recently," went on Miss Ladbrook, returning after a customer had gone, and taking up the conversation with appetite, "I mean the last few weeks—I tell you this to show you—I've been so cheerful about my engagement, and about everything going on so well, and his prospects being so fine, that more than once I've felt when I happened to be out there between the counters, that I could do a dance. But you've never seen me break out, have you now?"

"You're always fairly sulky," remarked Winnie.

"What you call sulkiness is really good manners; you'll discover that some day. I don't say you're not improving. I don't say that for a moment. Few



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coming into the shop would imagine that you had worked your way up from nothing at all. I thought at first it was mad, silly, stupid, ridiculous, but I'm bound to admit——"

"Less chattering please, ladies," ordered R. O., coming down importantly. "Good-afternoon, madam," with his best bow. "What can we have the pleasure of showing you? Forward, Miss Garland."

A noisily dressed woman threw her steel hand-bag on the counter. The high chair creaked, and R. O. searched for another.

"I've been called that," she declared, greatly diverted, "over and over again when I've been carrying on across the bar. The landlord's wife has come out of the room at the back and said it." She lifted her violet veil and inspected Winnie. "Well," she demanded. "Can't you say 'How are you?' to your half-sister?"

"How are you?" said Winnie.

"Shan't tell you now," she declared, with a piercing laugh, "just because you were so long asking. Oh dear, oh dear, what a life we all do live, to be sure! I never saw such a world before. They say wooden legs run in families."

The customers hurried with their purchases; paid at the desk, and, giving her a wide berth, escaped. She looked around the shop, and in view of the diminished audience appeared to decide that the manner of engaging incoherency need no longer be sustained.

"Don't see anything here that I'd give my soul for," she remarked.

"We prefer cash," said Winnie.

"Don't they pay you to be civil to ladies?"

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"Yes."

The flamboyant woman stopped and glared for a few moments. Then relaxed, and taking the high chair that R. O. had brought, she leaned both elbows on the counter.

"Show me some lace," she ordered, "and if you've got anything up to my mark I'll spend a bit of money. I can always manage to make it fly, providing I've got it. Mind you, I make it fly as I wish. No use people coming to me and, because they're my own flesh and blood, trying to make me fork out when I'm not inclined to do so. That's not the way to get money out of me. It may answer with some; but not with this child. Oh dear no! They mustn't come bullying and badgering me." She inspected the contents of the green cardboard box. "Haven't you got anything better?"

"I think you'll find that good enough," said Winnie quietly.

"Give me three yards."

"Makes me shriek," she went on, as Winnie measured, "to see little you standing there the other side of the counter, and behaving yourself as though butter wouldn't melt in your mouth. Can't be more than four or five years ago that——" A look in Winnie's eyes caused her to stop. "Wasn't it extraordinary I should happen to be in this neighbourhood, and wasn't it a miracle I should turn into this shop above all others? How long you been in this line of business? How long is it, I say? Can't you answer, or won't you?"

Winnie replaced the green cardboard box. Turning

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again, she wrote out the bill, her pencil trembling, and took it to Miss Connor to initial. "Your friend's just spoiling for a fight," whispered Miss Connor. "Look at the way her hat's nodding." Winnie went back.

"Pay at the desk, please."

"My paddy's getting up," said the other threateningly, as she gathered together some of her property, "and if you look at me like that, my girl, I shall begin to raise my voice to you."

"I'm afraid of your brothers," remarked Winnie, her back against the shelves, "and I'm never over-pleased to meet some of the other relations; but I'm not afraid of you, Kate, and I never have been. Be off now, before you go too far."

"You fancy yourself, standing there dressed in black, but why did you leave your last place? Ah!" knowingly, "you're afraid to say."

"I left my last place," replied Winnie, keeping her voice down—"the one, I mean, before I came here—because your brothers tried to make me give them the money I'd saved up."

"And why shouldn't they?" demanded the other angrily. "Why shouldn't you help like the rest of us? Since you began to earn money you've evaded us in every possible way, and for your poor father you've shown no consideration whatever."

Winnie interrupted with a few words. The other, taking up her muff, said, first, she did not believe it; second, she had heard nothing hitherto of the events announced; third, Winnie was a little hussy, and would do well in future to refrain from interference. Finally, that having now discovered the girl's address, it would

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be her constant endeavour to use all care to avoid meeting her again. She was striding out of the shop, when Winnie called attention to the necessity of paying for the articles; on her second departure she swept by, giving no indication of recognising the girl. Winnie turned to fence with the eager questions addressed to her.

Masters's was to close at nine o'clock, the night being Friday, the day of the week which, Winnie always declared, never brought luck. The circumstance that it was also the thirteenth of the month could be reckoned as ominous; if the combination chanced to bring good fortune it would not affect the general application of the argument. But for the visit of her half-sister the day had been quiet; so quiet that R. O. stood moodily at the doorway, hands behind his back, absorbed in thought, and having to be shifted by any chance customer who entered to make a trifling bargain; his apologies betrayed the absent mind; once he spoke to Miss Ladbrook in Welsh. Miss Ladbrook's opinion, given to her colleagues, was that matters in the shop were becoming twisted, and she promised to give to her youngish gentleman something in the nature of a hint concerning the drawbacks of procrastination. Miss Ladbrook said she would pack up and leave at once, but that it made her shiver to think of all that might happen to the business after she deprived it of her assistance; Winnie had to give the reminder that she, Winifred Garland, would still be there, and fears and apprehensions were, in consequence, unnecessary. One distinct advantage of R. O.'s preoccupation of mind was that a few old grudges against certain patronesses who

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only came in to grumble could be paid off without risk of reproof, and Miss Connor squared accounts and found herself something to the good with a lady from Upper Craven Place, in Highgate Road, who rarely entered without bringing some information concerning Irish members. Also, there existed freedom in regard to meals, and a syndicate was formed for the purchase of a luxury for supper; Winnie, as one experienced in laying out a market penny, ran from the shop at eight o'clock and came back from the fishmonger's with a newspaper parcel, held carefully from her black skirt; the contents were given to the goggle-eyed maid in the kitchen, with a definite warning to refrain from touching the lobster, from looking at it, from so much as winking at it, until Winnie should be free to give attention. The boy Robert, arriving, was sent to Mrs. Enefer's for two bunches of cos lettuce; he went with the air of one entrusted with an important diplomatic mission. Miss Ladbrook turned out a few of the gas jets, and she and Winnie entered the windows to dismantle the stands; the two compared their stages of tiredness, conceded that the morrow would be Saturday, but cheered each other by prophesying that the day after would be Sunday, bringing for Miss Ladbrook a meeting with her future husband, for Winnie a morning of grateful rest, and an afternoon and evening to be disposed of as she thought fit.

R. O. sat up at the desk, his left hand taking a good grip of the top of his head, a pen over each ear, and a pencil in his right hand; he seemed to be making an endeavour to do the financial work hitherto undertaken by his wife. Winnie ran downstairs to make sure

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that the maid was not playing tricks with the lobster, and, being there, delivered a short lecture on the shortcomings of servants, their carelessness in regard to many things, their disregard of the use of safety-pins, and especially their wilful neglect to recognise the existence of an untidy grate. Robert, panting with haste, scampered into the kitchen.

"I say, Miss."

"Give them here!"

"There's a rum-looking lot coming along asking for Masters's. I gave them the information, and I overheard something they said. Strikes me I'd better stand by, just in case of trouble."

She pressed her hands together and asked a question.

"Three, altogether. Two men and a woman. D'you hear them? D'you hear their voices in the shop?"

"Are they—are they asking for me?"

Robert went up the stairs, and, returning, nodded affirmatively. "You stay where you are," he advised, "or else slip out at the side door. No," correcting himself, "that's no use. The female is there watching. Go into the back garden."

"Stand aside," ordered Winnie. "This is my show. I'm going up to see it through."

The three young women, alarmed by the clamorous entry of two men, and forced to decide hastily upon a course of procedure, asserted that the name was utterly unknown to them, that ten doors up might be tried, that there existed a road of somewhat similar title away on the other side of London, gave promise that if they should hear by chance of the name of Garland

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they would not fail to communicate the information. At Winnie's appearance the three recalled themselves from their difficult task and went into partial retirement near the window. The two callers appeared to be men deliberate of movement; they eyed the girl slowly from top to toe; she looked at them without any trace of perturbation.

"Is that Aunt Charlotte outside?" she asked.

"It's your Aunt Charlotte."

"Tell her to be off. She's been here once before. Once too often."

"To see you?" they demanded suspiciously.

"She ought to remember what she came for. Tell her to clear away."

"Never mind about her; what about you, my girl? What do you mean by 'iding from the rest of the family in this—in this——"

"Disgraceful," suggested Jim.

"You be quiet. Disreputable way? We've been searching for you all over the blooming place. High and low, near and far, north and south, east and west. Isn't that so, Jim?"

"I ain't supposed to speak," said Jim.

"You can speak when I ask you to, can't you?"

"If I can't speak when I like," said Jim doggedly, "I'm not a-going to speak when I don't like. That's the kind of man I am."

The other turned from this fruitless argument.

"You sneaked off," he continued, "some long months ago from that place in Lewisham, simply because your Aunt Charlotte, your own father's sister, and one or two of the rest of us, paid a friendly call and had

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a chat with you down in the area. You distinctly asked us to call again, and when we did call again, in answer to your invitation, you'd taken your hook. You'd offed it. You'd flown. You'd gone away, leaving no address."

"Well?" she said.

"There's no well at all about it," he shouted. "It's not well; it's bad. You'd got a motive in giving us all the slip like that. You didn't do it for no reason. What you wanted to do was to get away somewhere, so's we should never find you."

"Well?"

"Jim," he said helplessly, "you have a go now."

"Not me!" declared Jim. "I've been told to shut up."

"If it wasn't that Kate chanced to come on your tracks this afternoon," he began again, "we might never have met you, never come across you, never run up against you this side of Jordan. We'd no more idea until Kate told us that you were living up here in Kentish Town than nothing at all. I've been this way more than once, and if I'd only known, I could have given you a look-in and told you how everybody was going on down at home and given you their kind regards."

"Well?"

He advanced a few paces, but she did not flinch. "If you can't find something else to say besides that," he said threateningly, "I shall begin to double up my fistes. When I double up my fistes, something gen'rally 'appens. You know that. We haven't took the trouble to come all this way just to hear you say 'Well' like a blooming parrot. You've got to do something besides

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say 'Well'; you've got to behave well. Not badly put, eh, Jim?" His brother declined to give approval. "You're doing yourself uncommon fine, getting on in the world, and you're ignoring—that's the word I've been wanting—ignoring your relatives, and never so much as attempting to give them a 'elping hand, or allowing them to share your good fortune."

"Finished?"

"Yes," he answered reluctantly, "for the present."

"Now let me talk," she said calmly. "And when I've done, you two go straight out of this shop, and don't you ever dare show your faces here again. I've never had much affection for any of you, neither has my own brother Bert."

"Knew there was someone else I wanted to ask about."

"And what little I had has disappeared. When I went out to service and earnt money for myself, you might have left me alone, but you didn't. One or the other of you was always after me, always wanting money, and always trying to frighten the life out of me. I made up my mind to put a stop to it, and for some considerable time past I have put a stop to it. And you can take it from me that I shall never give you—any of you—another penny, not even though I should be absolutely rolling in gold."

"See your poor father starve, would you?"

"That's the argument you always used," laughed the girl. "At one time it was effective, and the odd money you got out of me came in, I expect, very handy. I'm told the landlord of the pub in Farncombe Street had the front of the house done up last year.

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But the talk about father no longer helps you. It cost me a lot of money, and I had to get friends to help, but I managed it, and he's away now and comfortable, and," defiantly, "you can't get at him. That's the beauty of the arrangement. You can't get at him."

"Have you finished now?"

"Quite finished."

"When did you hear from him last?" He invited Jim's attention with a jerk of the elbow.

"Haven't heard from him. Don't expect to."

"What's his present address?"

"Shan't tell you," she retorted.

"Nice remark," he cried, shocked, "for a young lady in a shop to make. Shall we tell her, Jim, what the old man's present address is?"

"I'm not on in this act," said Jim, persisting in his attitude of reserve.

"You thought you were very clever, my slip of a girl, packing him away like that unbeknown to all of us; didn't occur to you that a man, London born, was never likely to settle down in the country. That young chap friend of yours must have been a jay. I should like to meet him. Jim here has met him, but I haven't had the pleasure. We had a thick time of it that night, I remember; father did us very well."

"Father?"

"The young chap," he raised his knee and slapped it appreciatively, "came back from that dead-alive place down in Kent by the five forty-six; father came back the same evening by the six twenty-five. They wasn't long after each other."

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Winnie snatched at a chair.

"The old man's in want now," he went on, with a touch of the beggar's whine. "In want of food and other things. And his message to you was that ten bob——"

"I'll send him something," she promised in a low voice.

"Got it about you?"

"Yes."

"Then," gripping her arm, "you'll be kind enough to give it to us. Come on, Jim."

A boy's figure flew out of the dusk at the back of the shop, and butting at Jim, upset his balance, causing him to stagger. Robert, following up this success, rushed again at him, and Miss Connor, the only one of the three ladies finding anything like enjoyment in the row, ran out and opened the doors. The man half recovered himself, and Robert, seizing a roll of calico, used it as a battering-ram. Winnie rushed forward to protect the boy, and received on her shoulder the blow intended for him. The next blow he escaped by dodging it; it went through the glass of one of the doors.

"Constable!" she cried. One man went out and across the road; Jim came hurrying to make his escape. Recognising him as the tamer of the two, Miss Ladbrook and Miss Baker took heart, and screamed, "You low person!" he raised his left arm, and they crouched back in the corner. Miss Connor flung herself upon him.

"Out of it!" ordered his brother, returning and effecting a rescue. "My girl," threateningly to Winnie,

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"you've brought it all on yourself. From this time 'enceforth you don't get a single moment's peace. Recollect that! If you don't give us what we ask, we'll——" He lowered his voice.

The woman out on the pavement screamed an epithet inappropriate to Winnie, but obviously intended for her. A policeman, noting the assembled crowd, crossed the road; the three vanished in different directions.

"I wish you would indeed endeavour to serve customers quietly," said R. O., coming from the counting-house, and still holding the top of his head. "There is too much conversation going on."

"Robert, my lad," panted Winnie. "I want you."

She went upstairs and packed her box swiftly—a servant's brown tin box, that was still large enough to hold all her property. Robert waited outside the door. She used a hair-brush before putting it away, and noted that her face was very white. Unable to lift the arm without pain, she had to ask Robert's assistance in fixing her hat; told him he would make a capital lady's maid. Robert did not allow her to take one handle of the box, but insisted on carrying it down by himself; an awkward task. Fetched by her directions a four-wheeler from Kentish Town Station, and he and the cabman placed the box a-top.

"Good-bye, Robert," out of the window. "God bless you!"

"I'd rather He blessed you," said the boy. "Where's the man to drive to?"

"Anywhere!" she replied recklessly.

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## CHAPTER VII

"Life's a pleasant railway journey, third or first or second,
Now a check near signals red, at junctions new and strange;
Fares and some details can soon be ascertained and reckoned,
Pity 'tis one's never quite sure where one ought to change!"

IF you met Mrs. Shorley, of Torriano Avenue (which, five minutes' sharp walk from Masters's, took a winding course from Camden Road, with a jump over Leighton Road, finishing with an uphill run into Brecknock Road), you were at once made the bailee of two pieces of information: first, that she had a sister at Muswell Hill who kept four servants and a gardener (to miss seeing the begonias there was to lose one of the highest privileges afforded in this world, and competing seriously with those promised in the next); second, that she had reason to hope circumstances would shortly enable her to say adieu to a neighbourhood which, in her opinion, had been steadily going down since her arrival. It is fair to say that no encouragements on her side were wanting for a betterment of position, and if her husband, having reached the maximum salary of a senior clerk in the office, had failed hitherto to induce the principals of the firm to choose him for special promotion, the fault was not hers. She made a point of seeing Mr. Shorley out of the house in the morning and of meeting him



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as he let himself, tired with a hard day in the City, into the house of an evening, and frequently put off important engagements in order to denounce him for his apparent lack of ambition, his obvious want of success; the address generally closed with a reference to her sister's husband at Muswell Hill and the dazzling triumphs of that gentleman. Indeed, the phrasing was so regular and so little liable to alteration that Mr. Shorley ate his meal or read his book and gave the appropriate deferential comment.

"There's a lot in what you say, my dear!" Or,

"Shouldn't like to argue that you weren't right." Or,

"Undoubtedly, my love; you've hit the nail this time."

Only once—so Torriano Avenue informed the new girl—on the return from an office dinner held in '89 at the Holborn, had he shown a spirit of contention, and the fact that he on that occasion ordered her to mind her own business and to permit him to mind his had served as text for nearly three years; his plea of unusual excitement being brushed away with the skill that comes of practice. Good reason to assume that Mrs. Shorley really believed she was doing the right and proper thing by thus harrying and badgering and worrying her husband, and there can be no doubt that many wives in this way persuade themselves they are sharing their partner's troubles, and in some obscure, ingenious way doubling his joys.

Cook was something of an elderly retainer, having been in the house for a period of four consecutive months; housemaids came and went with such fre-

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quency as to suggest a procession, and the rank near the Brecknock grew resentful if one stayed beyond the usual time, members saying to each other that it was a wonder they took the trouble to bring a horse and a cab out of the stables.

On Mrs. Shorley telling her husband that at last she had secured a treasure, Mr. Shorley endeavoured to pretend that the phrase had not reached his ears before. One drawback and one drawback only, it appeared, existed: the new treasure declined flatly and definitely to act as outdoor companion. The lady held the view, borrowed from Muswell Hill, that the possession of good looks made it imperative one should not be seen alone out of doors; moreover, she derived much satisfaction in public conveyances by talking audibly to a companion and allowing other passengers to recognise the respective positions. Mrs. Shorley waylaid the new girl on staircases, interrupted her in work, followed her to the very door of the kitchen, in eagerness to persuade; the new girl replied that she wanted nothing better than domestic service, that she had been trying a change, and wished, on retrospection, that she had not; that she felt safer by day indoors than out of doors; finally, she strongly advised her mistress to take up fancy work, or do something useful, in order to chase the monotony which appeared to afflict the hours. Mrs. Shorley shook her head and said definitely that she would never take part in any occupation for which Muswell Hill did not give a precedent. She further explained for the benefit of the new girl, that there was such a thing as breeding, that breeding was incompatible

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with fancy work, that its presence could always be recognised; she turned to arrange, affectionately, her photographs of theatrical celebrities, arranged in the style of a fan upon the walls, telling Mr. William Terriss not to tumble about, and giving a word of warning to Miss Minnie Palmer.

Although the new girl at first declined to entertain the suggestion that she should take up the task of chaperoning her mistress on expeditions to West End shops, there seemed no good reason, after a month or two of caution, why she should not venture out sometimes in the company of her mistress, sometimes in other company. A note addressed to Euston Station at this period of change in methods, took away wrinkles of deep thought from the features of a clerk in the Down Parcels Office, and modified the sternness of his communications to various points of the line. Arthur Lord, calling at Torriano Avenue as directed, conducted her now to the gymnasium once a week by a circuitous route, avoiding Leighton Road and Kentish Town Road, and other main thoroughfares, and found himself compensated for temporary desertion by receiving a permit to take her arm; he ventured to enter a protest against the silence she had kept, declaring that it mattered nothing to him whether she was a servant in a private house or an assistant in a shop, or the greatest lady in the land; he entered an even more emphatic protest against the suggestion that he went in fear of another drubbing. As a fact, he had seen one of the men loafing about on Number Four platform at the station, and called, in his full view, the attention of the plain-clothes

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detective, who had thereupon gone over to Jim and whispered a word of advice. Following Jim out of the station, Arthur Lord—and this would, perhaps, be considered proof at once of courage, and of his keen desire to learn news of her—Arthur Lord touched him on the shoulder in Seymour Street, asking civilly if he knew where Winnie had gone; Jim replied after borrowing a shilling—

"You dunderhead!" cried Winnie.

—By volunteering the information that, so far as he and his relatives had been able to ascertain, Winnie was in some place of business in Westbourne Grove, on the left-hand side going up. In reply to Winnie's eager question, young Lord admitted he had forgotten to ask after her father; urged that this mattered the less, seeing that if the inquiry had been put, it was too much to hope that the answer would be marked by strict veracity. He promised, if Winnie desired him to do so, to run down to Bermondsey in disguise, and, accompanied by his friend Chapman, to look about and make such inquiries as would result in setting her mind at rest.

"Don't you go getting into a squabble with them again," she ordered. "It's for me to do it, if anybody."

"I'll do more than that for you."

"Don't want you to," she declared sharply. "Don't want you to be mixed up with them, in any way whatsoever. You're a different class from them."

"So are you." After a pause. "Satisfied with your new situation, may I ask?"

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"Better than none," replied Winnie. "I'm trying to teach her to keep her place."

At the gymnasium events that had at first seemed incredible were now accepted as ordinary, and the emphatic masterfulness of Fraulein and her drill-sergeant methods no longer gave a shock. It was "Position. Arms extended. Arms up. DOWN," and "Position. Arms to the chest. Elbows well down. Arms extended. Knees well out. DOWN." Prancing steps up and down the hall ("Head up. Chin in!"). Shining black clubs starting at a definite note on the piano; going out with a lunge, returning, pretending to be a windmill and if all went well finishing simultaneously with the last chord. The appalling sound of "Click!" came now and again, and Fraulein gave a sharp reprimand, covering the student in fault with scarlet confusion; the class starting afresh with reproachful looks at the offender. A busy and sometimes a distressing hour, leaving the girls, however, with complexions that suggested they had been born and bred not in Kentish Town, but in a country village. Mrs. Shorley, told of all this, declared she would only undertake the task for the State jewels in the Tower.

The friendliness of Mrs. Shorley had its fair side, for although the girl could not persuade her mistress to take interest in the Deeming murders or in the events connected with the name of Jack the Ripper, they found a common sympathy in regard to the theatre; Mrs. Shorley, to go to an afternoon performance, would bustle about the house impressing upon Winnie the necessity of expediting domestic work.

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Cook, as a Baptist, did not mind being left out of these adventures. Whilst Mr. Shorley drove his pen in a corner of Great Tower Street where the sun never came, his wife and Winnie sat in the pit at the Gaiety, and learnt the astonishing air of "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!" later, in Torriano Avenue, Mrs. Shorley made unsuccessful efforts in the drawing-room to imitate the dance, and Winnie downstairs performed it easily for the benefit of cook, interesting cook a good deal, but causing her to speak of eternal fire, and to quote freely from Revelations. At the Olympic they saw "Called Back," and cook, shivering at the more grisly incidents of the story recited to her, began to consider whether if one went to a theatre at the expense of somebody else—say a postman—one escaped the punishment awarded to most in the next world. When novelties failed, there remained German Reed's Entertainment at St. George's Hall, of which Mrs. Shorley said excusingly, in answer to Winnie's criticism, that it was at any rate refined. To Mrs. Shorley came at this period a time of deep depression—the result of the departure for Australia of a Gaiety actor to whom she had given abstract affection of a fervour seldom equalled (so she said) and never surpassed. She feared his absence would be the death of her. She doubted whether it would be possible for her to enter a theatre again. She wished Heaven would take her.

"If Mr. Shorley had only been on the stage," moaned the lady, "we should have been so happy together."

Winnie and cook agreed that Torriano Avenue would have a deteriorating effect on most girls; they

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congratulated themselves on being out of the ordinary and well above influence. Even a mistress who reached the extremes of imperfection attained by Mrs. Shorley could not affect them. True, they might be becoming slack in the performance of duties, and the house, to a cold, observant eye, showed signs of neglect, but, after all, if no one else remarked on these defects they might fairly be considered as non-existent. Thus, cook and Winnie, on complacent terms with each other, with confidences on the side of cook, until one evening the half-past nine postman remarked to Winnie, who had just said "Good-night" to young Lord, that, unless he was greatly mistaken, we should have some mixed-up sort of weather at Easter. Cook, listening in the area below, met Winnie with a wild and furious spray of reproaches; hot with anger, she denounced Winnie as being no better than she ought to be (a statement applicable to most of us, but given by cook as violent abuse), inquiring how she dared allowed herself to be spoken to by one engaged to another, and threatening to have the law of her, or to scratch her face, or both. Mr. Shorley came down to act as mild arbitrator, and cook, turning upon him, tore his coat from his back, bunched it into a ball, and threw it at him, cried three times for her mother, sang, at a great pace, "We shall gather at the river," and swooned; when she recovered, Mr. Shorley, acting upon instructions from his wife, placed a box outside the front gate and, with full payment for services rendered, cook went. The household recovered its ordinary calm, and Winnie persuaded the mistress to allow her to do the entire work of the house for a time.

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Mrs. Shorley, in agreeing, expressed an earnest hope that society would not get to hear of this reduction in the establishment. "For in that case," declared the lady tragically, "I should never be able to hold up my head again!"

Once more Winnie found herself in her own proper element. She deplored the suspension of visits to the play, and Mrs. Shorley, unwilling to go alone for fear of meeting the hypothetical male who should intrude himself upon her acquaintance, also regretted this deeply, and endeavoured to make amends by starting a series of At Homes on second and last Thursdays. The first proved a brilliant success, for there was only just enough cake to go round, and the sister from Muswell Hill drove up late, but not too late, with a coachman, who wore, because his master was a stockbroker, a cockade. References were made by Mrs. Shorley to Newton, the other maid, and her sudden and most unfortunate indisposition. Tufnell Park inspected the photographs and talked of literature and of the work of Sir Frederick Leighton, and went, exacting solemn promises from Mrs. Shorley to play the game fairly and reciprocate by coming to their afternoons.

So far, good. But to the second At Home, for which Winnie made liberal provision, no visitor came, male or female, and matrimony puddings and bread-and-butter puddings had to be contemplated. This was hard enough; to add to Mrs. Shorley's annoyance, her husband was brought home that evening, having fallen down near Broad Street in hurrying for his train; a stroke, the doctor said; sheer stupidity,

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said his wife. Mrs. Shorley declared it out of the question to ask her to attend at his bedside, for this would mean imperilling her own health, and a nurse had to be engaged—a nurse described immediately upon arrival as quite the dearest woman in the world, and one in whom Mrs. Shorley really felt she had at last found a true and valued friend; one whose companionship she would not willingly resign. The nurse being new to London, Mrs. Shorley exhibited eagerness to take her around and show the sights; after enduring the society of Winnie for so long, it was, as she tactfully said, indeed good to encounter a young woman possessed of something like breeding, a suggestion through a married cousin, of rank. Besides which there was the necessity of keeping pace with the times, and for some time past she had been a laggard.

So Winnie added, when the ladies were absent, the occupation of attending Mr. Shorley to her other duties, and the patient seemed to appreciate her endeavours. His face had twisted on one side, and occasionally speech appeared indistinct, but the girl noted curiously that at times he spoke to her of his wonderful wife; what a manager she was; so clever with the needle, and so adroit—if she had cared to follow it up—with the pen; at other moments he talked wildly, crying aloud that he must somehow get more money, more money, more money, and if he could not get this by working overtime, then—— He lowered his voice, and Winnie failed to comprehend the meaning of his muttered words. She talked soothingly to him, and he, regaining control over his

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phrases, said once more that his wife was indeed a wonderful woman. A senior clerk called from the office when the two women were out; Mr. Shorley screamed and appealed to Winnie to send him away, and she went down to the visitor and begged him not to make further effort to see his colleague. She took his message — that he had only called to get news of his friend and to say that everything was going on well at Great Tower Street—and Mr. Shorley kissed her hand, babbled thanks, and talked again of his noble-hearted wife. Winnie considered it a satisfactory circumstance that women, whether worthy or not, should be thus regarded.

The girl was in the kitchen one evening, busy with the task of clearing up some forgotten items of a crowded day, rubbing stair-rods, shining brass candlesticks, when she heard the whistled first line of "I am the Captain of the Pinafore" outside the railings, which were on a level with the top of the window, followed by three stamps of the foot. Recognising the signal, she pulled off her gloves and ran out to the steps.

"News for you," said Arthur Lord, holding two of the area railings and speaking between them. "Come up closer."

"Hair in curl-papers," she replied.

"As though I cared!"

"It isn't you; it's passers-by."

"Well," he began, "I've been down there. Took Chapman with me. He wanted to dress up like a tramp, but I told him his ordinary appearance would do. And you remember your Aunt Charlotte."

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She begged for particulars concerning her father, his appearance, his manner. He supplied these, and said, once more, did she remember her Aunt Charlotte.

"I ought to," she declared vehemently. "Aunt Charlotte's the worst of the whole set. I've believed more than once the men would have let me be if she hadn't egged them on. About as bad as they make 'em."

"She's gone."

"Gone where?"

"There's only two guesses. What I mean is, she's going to be buried on Saturday."

Winnie covered her face quickly with her apron, and he waited, surprised at this reception of the news.

"I shall go to Masters's for my black," she said presently, wiping her eyes.

"Mean to tell me you're going to the funeral?"

"Course I'm going to the funeral."

"You're putting your head in the lion's mouth."

"Safe enough if I make him hold his jaw."

"Well," he gasped amazedly, "you are, upon my word, the oddest girl I ever came across in the whole course of my existence."

"I should think that myself," she retorted, "if I didn't go to see poor dear Aunt Charlotte put away!"

Winnie did go to Masters's establishment, and Mrs. Enefer, with her daughter, counting it an honour to be consulted on the important occasion, promised to furnish a wreath for five-and-six that would cost an ordinary customer, with no claims, so much as ten shillings. Mrs. Shorley advanced two months' wages, and presented a pair of black gloves which

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communicated signs of deep mourning to everything touched by them. The nurse, whilst regretting that Winnie's absence would entail her own attendance in the house for the whole of an afternoon, and compel the postponement of a visit to Toole's Theatre, offered loan of a black cape, very full at the shoulders and proving—to Winnie's surprise—only a couple of inches too long. Now nurse was a tallish woman.

At Masters's, where her reception touched the point of enthusiasm, she asked Miss Connor, in the intervals of selection, to take careful observation by aid of the tape, and Miss Connor, assuring her first that she certainly had grown, made her take off her hat, and, allowing for heels, gave the top-to-toe result as five feet seven inches and a half, adding a guarantee of accuracy worded in a manner that carried conviction. A great deal had happened at Masters's during the period elapsing since Winnie's departure, and the girl spent a perfect hour, partly in selecting a ready-made costume which had been there on a stand in her time—she had frequently acclaimed its attractions, but now she said that half an eye only was necessary to recognise that it was shop soiled — mainly, in receiving from the bunch of young women, who dropped everything to come to her, full details of recent events. R. O., it appeared, had sought distraction, in the absence of his wife and baby, by finding near the Britannia a man who, knowing the first and last word about horses, and especially those which raced with each other, declined (as the selfish might have done) to keep this knowledge for personal use and advantage, but

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issued it generously to all willing to pay a small sum to cover out-of-pocket expenses. "Fear Nothing," said this philanthropist in a daily stencilled address to his constituents. "We Never Fail. We Can't Do Wrong." He added, "Who Gave King Coffee for Manchester?" abstaining, either because of modesty or caution, from giving an answer. R. O. had been heard to say there were quicker ways of making a fortune than by selling reels of white cotton, and at the desk spent his time in the working out of intricate problems, such as this: seeing that Tally Ho won the So-and-So Handicap, a distance of one mile and five furlongs, and carrying seven stone four, and that En Avant gained the Such-and-Such, a distance of one mile and a half, and carrying seven stone eleven, what chances had Merry Thought of winning the What's-its-name Race at Kempton on Friday, April the 13th? Miss Ladbrook repeated the comment of her youngish gentleman on this state of affairs and agreed with the criticism; Miss Baker, the apprentice, said that what was to be would be; Miss Connor remarked there was not sufficient time to shake a stick at all the fun one met in this world. The young women were unanimous in declaring that Masters's had seen its best days, that it was going to the deuce with celerity, that a load would disengage itself from their shoulders when the boy Robert put up the shutters for the last time. Robert, they declared, went about like a mummy, and as to the goggle-eyed servant, she spent her time gossiping over the wall of the back garden; they urged the visitor to slip down to the kitchen and give a look, for no words of theirs could manage to convey an accurate description.

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This Winnie did, with some reproving thought of what her attitude would be were her own kitchen to be thus secretly inspected; she returned, unable to do more than throw one hand upwards and exclaim,

"Oh, my gracious!"

The ladies said they had a fear lest Winnie should have gone back to domestic service; this, they declared, would have been a pity of pities after she had contrived by good luck and by some efforts of her own to reach the conspicuous height of a shop assistant; for, in their view, there was nothing more painful than to see a descent of the ladder after some valuable rungs had been conquered. Miss Enefer, accompanying Winnie as adviser and assessor, by dexterous handling of the truth corrected these mournful apprehensions and spoke of her visit to Winnie at Bayswater, and of Winnie's affection for the old ladies who had the fortune to engage her services as secretary as one of the pleasantest memories she could at the moment recall. The three young women said they could quite believe it, and they said this with such excess of emphasis that it seemed clear they gave no credit whatever to Miss Enefer's statement.

"Bad day for Masters's," said Winnie, changing the trend of conversation, "when I left. I suppose it was selfish of me to do so. Might have guessed everything would go to rack and ruin.'

"By the bye," remarked Miss Ladbrook, restive under this, "how are your relatives? Those two, I mean, who called and kicked up somewhat of a shindy."

"Show me some black-bordered handkerchiefs,

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please," interrupted Winnie. "No, no, not off that shelf. None of your games with me."

"They called again, I may tell you," persisted the other, "but they went quietly enough when they found you'd gone. They said something about you that I shouldn't dare to repeat, something that I don't know how to spell."

"I'll take three of these," she said calmly. "Is there anything else, I wonder, that we can think of?"

"Where will we have the pleasure of sending the articles?" asked Miss Connor. The other two said "Ah!" and waited.

"I'll take it with me." The other two said "Bother!" under their breath. "I don't mind being seen carrying a parcel."

Arthur Lord begged to be allowed to accompany her to Bermondsey; urged the possession of a suit of dark clothes, and said that he could take charge of the wreath. Permission refused, he prophesied trouble would most certainly take place, and incautiously admitted that he had an old score to settle; found himself thereupon denounced as a firebrand, a quarrelsome busybody, a raker of past grievances, one desirous of turning a solemn occasion into a prize fight. His protestation that he was thinking mainly of her received open derision, and he then announced furiously that he washed his hands in regard to the affair, disclaimed everything in the shape of responsibility. Liking him well in a mood of this kind, she soothed him, and said that he was all right and she was all right, and everything was all right, but that times came when she preferred to manage for herself, and this was one.

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She gave him the latest news of Mr. Shorley with a faithful imitation of the poor gentleman's wanderings, and young Lord warned her not to wear herself out for the sake of other people, not to pay attention to chance remarks that might be made.

And pray, what did he mean by that? What had anyone been saying about her? Reply, that he still hoped he might look after her at Bermondsey. Swift interruption to the effect that should he particularly want to know, she was not going to Bermondsey, had never dreamt of going to Bermondsey, always intended, and still intended, to go to the cemetery direct. But that was not the present question. She wanted to know, and she insisted upon knowing, what anyone had been saying about her? He protested that he took no notice of anything; he felt content to go steadily on his own way, paying to the remarks no attention. What, in tones of insistent demand, were those remarks? Unless he told her, now and distinctly, he might bid good-bye to any hope of ever being allowed to speak to her again. Well (reluctantly), if she must know, she must. It was all that fellow Chapman. Chapman in the Clearing House. He had looked upon Chapman as one of the few who could be trusted. What was his surprise the other afternoon, on meeting a crowd of Chapman's colleagues coming out into Seymour Street at lunch time, to be assailed with the chaffing inquiry, several times repeated, "How's the slavey?" Moreover, his sister, he regretted to say, had got hold of the news.

Winnie announced with determination that she con-



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sidered him, Arthur Lord, a snob, nothing more nor less; a girl was the same whether she wore an apron over a print skirt, or whether she wore black and served behind a drapery counter. He declared that he completely agreed with her. Then why had he not pitched into these Clearing House chaps? Simply because, he replied, simply because they numbered about seventy or eighty, whilst his total number was one. Winnie now added to her previous description, and asserted that he was not only a snob, but a coward. Arthur Lord, turning, said that some day she would deeply regret having made these remarks, a prophecy which she derided. Winnie descended to the kitchen, satisfied at having asserted dignity; exultant with the protest she had made; content to have had the opportunity of showing the power that can be exercised by tyrants.

"I shall make a bit of a nagger," she laughed to herself in the kitchen, "when I'm married to him."

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## CHAPTER VIII

"God, rest her soul!
You gave her here no peace, she gave no peace to you.
God, rest her soul!"

BETWEEN London Bridge and her destination she observed just in time that the brown cardboard box bore a Kentish Town address; in taking out the wreath and placing the box underneath the seat of the railway carriage, she reminded herself that the solemnity of the proceedings at the cemetery would not prevent members of the family from making endeavours to discover particulars recently kept from them. A sympathetic woman in the compartment asked for information, and Winnie found herself telling the truth, and this gave her occasion for surprise; not so long since she would have grabbed at the opportunity for romancing. The woman declared it a mere nothing, and gave a triumphant table of the disasters which had occurred in her own family; if only a cousin in St. Thomas's consented to go, instead of hanging on and on and on, in a senseless, ridiculous way, the total would assume round figures easy to recollect; the case of a family where only three had taken their departure was scarcely, so to speak, in the running, and not by



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any means up to the standard that London had a right to expect.

At the cemetery gates, with its warnings of "No Smoking Allowed. Dogs not Permitted," the girl waited, inspecting folk in the crowded black carriages, approving the wreaths of flowers and comparing them with the one she held; her under-lip moved when now and again a little white coffin came in a glass case just behind the driver. It occurred to her that she had not had a game with a baby for a long time, and she wanted to think of Mrs. R. O.'s youngster; instead, she sent her mind to Aunt Charlotte, disreputable Aunt Charlotte, deplorable Aunt Charlotte, who quarrelled with the world, and with whom the world quarrelled. She could picture her as she last saw her outside Masters's, could see her in even more reprehensible surroundings. A terror, that was the only description one could give to Aunt Charlotte; a terror. Aunt Charlotte, she remembered, used to flatter herself that she knew every sergeant in the Division, and that they knew her; few could identify a detective in plain clothes with such accuracy. Aunt Charlotte knew the reporters, too, at Southwark Police Court, and was on nodding terms with them; they sometimes headed the paragraphs with, "Mrs. Robinson Again!" There had once appeared a short leading article about her, entitled A Difficult Problem. Aunt Charlotte having been, in her day, a busy manufacturer of trouble, the world might well express relief at her departure.

Who was this coming in stately hearse with violet pall a-top and wreaths hanging at every corner;

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four black horses capering majestically with black velvet trappings, and two men on the box who appeared to have made endeavour to drown other people's sorrows in drink? Here, surely, some personage of conspicuous importance, who, having led a white, blameless life with steady consideration for fellow-creatures, had answered, as all must answer, the beckoning finger, and, going, had left friends to a sorrow that would later change to a beautiful memory. Two carriages followed with men and women, red about the eyes from weeping, handkerchiefs well in evidence, chins resting on the open window space of doors. A halt ordered at the gates, and two men stepping out assured each other that a drink would certainly do no harm, might indeed effect a considerable amount of good; they called "Father!" to someone in the coach, and said that he could come along and pay for the refreshment. Winnie interposed.

"Why, here's the kid. The kid, and no kid about it. Ordering of us as usual."

"Back into your carriage," she repeated. They obeyed. "Hullo, all of you!"

"We can make room for a little one," remarked her parent. He seemed but slightly disconcerted by the sight of her.

"Thought I sent you down into the country, father."

"It can all be explained," he pleaded. "A word presently from me, and you'll understand everything. Came on to rain that evening after your young man had gone; that was partly the reason."

She walked by the side of the first carriage to

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the chapel; at the doors she had to remind the men that they were expected to take off hats; an aunt undid bonnet strings, and she gave to her a whispered word. Folk already in the chapel looked around with the air of reproving them for late arrival, and a curate, receiving a nod from someone as the men rested the coffin, started at a rapid rate, in the manner of a schoolboy who, having to give a recitation, is determined to get it over quickly as possible; Winnie noted, however, with approval, that he made no blunders over the genders and numbers. Jim complained in his hoarse voice when, on going out into the wind-blown cemetery, the curate put on a black cap. Jim said he did not like the look of it. It was not, in Jim's view, appropriate to this particular occasion, and he did not like it.

The body of Aunt Charlotte, our dear sister here departed, was committed to the ground, and Winnie, listening carefully to the words that came in her direction, felt it all very gracious and beautiful and comforting; hoped that when her time came people would be moved and concerned as she was moved and concerned now. Looking around, she could detect the kindness that cessation of life inspired; on no tombstone a carping word, in no quotation so much as a hint of reproach; here and there, instead of a text, something like a character was given. (That reminded her: she must get a character if she ever left Torriano Avenue.) "A good daughter, a faithful wife, a devoted mother." Allowing for slight exaggeration, here was a fine statement to be exhibited over one's mortal remains; approval worth the earning,

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approval that apparently came whether one earnt it or not.

". . . Be with us all for evermore. Amen."

She found, as they walked silently back to the gates, stopping occasionally to inspect flowers on graves, that her view of poor Aunt Charlotte had already changed. A rare incident of years ago, when at the end of May a small wooden doll had been brought home from Epsom, and presented, came to Winnie's mind, to be accepted as typical of a gentleness, a striking amiability in Aunt Charlotte's character, sending other events into the mist of forgetfulness. Looking at the members of the family, scrunching along the brown gravelled roadway, she tried to see that they too were mainly good, with a veneer of, say, awkwardness, calculated to prejudice the opinion of those who came in contact with them. Certainly their behaviour for the moment, going along now at the edge of the grass with so much reverence that they tried to prevent new boots from creaking, left nothing to be desired. At the gates the wind put William to an unfair test by taking his crape-bound bowler hat and trundling it to a shallow pond on the other side of the roadway.

"It's soon over with William," said the father excusingly, as he came to her side. "He's gifted with a flow of language, but once he's expressed himself it's done and finished with."

William endeavoured to wipe his hat on his brother's overcoat. The solo became a duet.

"Tell them to stop," begged Winnie. "I'm not used to hearing language of that kind."

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"They don't take no notice of me; not one of them don't. You have a try."

A hansom cab dashed up and saved Winnie from essaying a difficult task. The fare gathered up skirts in one hand, and, stepping out, paid the cabman, who said heartily, "Goo' luck to you, Kate."

"All behindhand again, as usual," grumbled one of the aunts. "Your 'alf-sister was here waiting for us. If it had been my funeral that you'd been late for, my girl, I should have said something."

"She does it to show off," said one of the other ladies. "Because she's doing well in the public line, she thinks she's everybody."

"You're looking quite decent," declared the newcomer to Winnie, ignoring the critics. "No idea, till I saw you in the shop that afternoon, that you'd got any good looks."

"I'd known it a long time."

"I suppose black suits you. Suits a lot of people. I want something livelier. Cream's my colour. How did the affair go off? Meant to have been here before it started, but somehow everything seemed to happen. Always does when I want to get away. Hullo, father!"

"You've missed the best of it, Kate," said her father. "Now you have arrived, which is it to be?"

Kate gave a twist to the fastening of her purse.

"Two of 'em," reported Jim, "two. I noticed coming along; and so far as I can see there's little to choose between them. One of them's got a saloon, but personally I'd always rather stand at the bar."

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"We'll all go along," decided Winnie, "to this place on the left."

"I'm not going to spend money on tea," said Kate. The others hummed approval.

"I'll settle," said Winnie. "Come on, father. Us two will lead the way."

They preserved an air of sadness as they followed, men of the party giving use of the pavement to the ladies. In the Reliance Restaurant the womenfolk cheered up on seeing a brown teapot placed alertly on the white-clothed table, and one said that the thinness of the brown bread and butter took her back twenty years. Winnie poured out.

"She would have enjoyed this," remarked somebody. "Nothing pleased her more than to be with a party of friends, where everyone knew everyone, and all was friendly and pleasant."

"The life and soul of it wherever she was."

"Full of her chaff and her merry ways."

"Always knew when she'd had enough."

"We shall live a long time," said the father, in summing up and addressing his daughters, "and a lot of water will run under London Bridge, before we find another like your Aunt Charlotte. A woman of a thousand, I reckon she was."

"Of a million," amended an aunt. "Not but what," hedging slightly, "not but what she had her faults."

"We all have our faults," said the father impartially. "We shouldn't be human if we hadn't our faults. We're not meant to be perfect. One above is very well satisfied if we're as near perfect as we can manage to be."

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They sighed reverently, and gave attention to the cake. Winnie, from the top of the table, again felt convinced she had misjudged them, had regarded them too harshly: the men, hats tipped back and gulping at the contents of saucers, appeared in their black suits and new collars estimable members of society, only requiring good opportunities to succeed in life. Jim and William, impressed by the tone given by father to the conversation, seemed to be sending their minds back on a search through copybooks of youth without achieving great success. An aunt said, "Ah, there's a good deal we're not permitted to know!" and the table felt that in this particular direction the last word had now been given.

"Kate," cried the father, giving a genial turn to the conversation, "you're very quiet for once. 'Tisn't often we have to complain of silence on your part."

"I was thinking," said Kate, resting her chin on a fist and looking hard at an advertisement on the wall, "whether there's anything in omens."

"She had a warning," said the aunt definitely. "Undoubtedly she had a warning. She as good as told me so."

"That card hanging on the wall," remarked Kate earnestly, "has got the words Swiss Chocolate on it. To-morrow at Hurst Park Mountain Boy is running."

Winnie sat back as the discussion became clamorous on the arguable point introduced by her half-sister. The question interested them, but it did not interest her; she would have been content to look upon it as representing a harmless and even an estimable hobby, but that she remembered the troubles occasioned to

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her mother years before by the confidence felt by members of the family in certain horses; recollected that on the rare occasions when fortune smiled the sum gained without manual labour, without any trouble other than that of an exercise of ingenuity, vanished in the way that smoke disappears. There could be no mistaking the attraction the subject had for the rest of the family. As Kate described a marvellous stroke of good fortune which had come to a gentleman friend of hers, food was pushed aside, cups neglected, and the two waitresses turned a blind eye to new customers; when these became insistent, one waitress left to the other the duty of following the story with care, that missing chapters might be related to her later on. Upon Kate's gentleman friend being left with seven pounds ten to the good, listeners gave a long and deep-drawn sigh of envy; the additional information that the lucky man found himself the next morning inside the railings of Green Park without a halfpenny in his pocket appeared to be considered by some an anti-climax, by others a right and fitting sequel to a glorious day. All knew instances of a similar nature, varying in magnificence; no speculations of a disastrous nature were mentioned. Kate distributed several tips which had come to her from stable to bar by roundabout routes, and the men, sharing a stumpy pencil, made due note of these on backs of envelopes, and told Kate she was a good sort. The father, noting that his younger daughter remained outside the discussion, moved from his seat, took her hand and, patting it, asked how the world was using her, and expressed a hope, in connection with the trifling affair down in Kent, that

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by-gones might be considered in no other light than by-gones. A hard-and-fast rule to which he drew attention was that what cannot be cured must be endured.

"'Pon me word, though," he declared, "it's a pleasure to see one's daughters growing up good-looking and well-behaved." Kate, using a gesture, touched the warm teapot, and gave a spirited ejaculation. "You," he went on, "at any rate. And I lay you're making friends, Winnie, wherever you are, and getting a nice circle of acquaintances."

"Mustn't complain, father."

"Ever hear anything more of that old gentleman who was in the hotel line of business, an uncle of someone?"

"Haven't dared to meet him since."

"There's some more to be made out of him, surely." She looked at him sharply.

"Don't be 'arsh with your poor father," he pleaded. "He's never had a proper chance to show the world what he's made of."

She put a hand on either side of his face and kissed him. "You're a queer old stupid," she said affectionately. "I can be cross with the others, because they've tried to do me a lot of harm at different times. But I can't be cross with you."

He turned his chair to her. "I very often want to see my little gel," he said. "Suppose it is because she's the pick of the bunch, and because she reminds me of her poor mother. Howsomever, I walk about and I keep saying to myself, 'Why, I may run across baby if I turn down this road.' But I never do. If only I knew where to drop a line and catch you

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without being the least bother in the world, I should be saved worry."

"Can I trust you?" she whispered impetuously. "Honour bright? Will you give me your word not to let the others know?"

"True as I sit here!" he declared.

Winnie settled the account, and they all embraced her, Kate giving a special hug, and she went in a glow of satisfaction, consequent on being at peace with the world, that lasted the entire journey across London to Tufnell Park. She lost no time on the journey, for she felt anxious to take up again the duty of looking after an invalid; the other two, she knew, were not reliable. Outside the railings of the house in Torriano Avenue, and clinging to them, in silk hat and frock suit, Winnie found Mr. Shorley. He told her that he was learning to play the harp, and asked if she had such a thing as a tuning-fork about her. She induced him to come indoors, and when he became violent, assured him that his accounts at Great Tower Street were in order, that no detectives were coming after him. He said another week at the office and he would have done something that if discovered meant the Old Bailey. Winnie sat with him for three hours until Mrs. Shorley and the nurse came home from the theatre, to which they had been suddenly tempted, and then ran to fetch the doctor.

"Didn't he frighten you?" asked the general practitioner, as he returned with her at a trot. "No? You're a plucky girl."

"Rather!" agreed Winnie.

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## CHAPTER IX

"Two heads are better than one; but this refers only to asparagus!"

VISITS to an area have a touch of the secrecy that has to be observed when the effort is made to look in on an imprisoned comrade in the enemy's fortress. When, therefore, Mrs. Enefer and her daughter received the invitation from Torriano Avenue, they expected to have to watch an opportunity on arriving, and, this obtained, to slip furtively down the steps, gaining the kitchen with a sigh of relief. Also, they anticipated it would be necessary to carry on conversation over tea with their white-capped, white-aproned young hostess in hushed tones, conversation likely to be disturbed more than once by the ringing of a bell from upstairs, on which occasions they would close lips tightly and hold breath. Instead, they found themselves received openly at the front gate; Winnie, with her hair brushed up at the back, and carried to the top of the head; no apron, no cap, a smart bodice, with a ruff worn somewhat lower than in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, pale blue sash around her waist finished with a large bow; slippers the colour of bronze. Mrs. Enefer, a woman of plain and direct speech, asked, as they ascended the steps to the hall,



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what Winnie was supposed to represent, adding that it would have been fairer to have added the words, fancy dress, to the postcard. She also inquired the date when the steps last received the attentions that hearthstone can give; begged Winnie, however, on no account to tax her memory.

"This is Liberty Hall," announced the girl. "Do as you like is the motto here now."

Mrs. Enefer made a bitter comment; Winnie begged her to iron out her features. Miss Enefer apologised, saying that some people were naturally old-fashioned; Miss Enefer, for her part, confessed to a preference for going upstairs instead of going downstairs.

"I may be slightly out of date," admitted the elder lady, "but I don't particularly care for being frightened when I've got a cup halfway to my lips, and having to scuttle off like a frightened rabbit. So I tell you straight!"

"I mentioned I was asking friends, and she says, 'Oh,' she says, 'make them comfortable.'"

"Where's she gone?"

"Into society."

"Where's that?"

"Don't ask me," laughed Winnie. "She says she's got the chance now of mixing with really good people, and she means to take advantage of it. Looks through the paper every morning, and if there's a wedding on at St. George's, Hanover Square, off she goes to that; if there's a swell bazaar to be opened, off she goes to that; if Royalty is to be anywhere, wild horses won't keep her at home."

"What I want," said Mrs. Enefer, resting stiffly on a

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sofa, "is less talk and more tea. See about it, you two, and don't give me the first. I like mine with a taste in it."

It gratified Winnie to find her visitors impressed by the surroundings: the china cups and saucers, the pictures and photographs on the walls, the framed autograph letter from Mr. Irving, the chenille monkeys arrested in the act of doing trapèze performances on lace curtains. Miss Enefer remarked that she had been thinking the matter over, and thinking the matter over, and yet again thinking the matter over; her trend of mind was now in the direction of marrying money, for which wild statement the mother promptly issued a garnishee order on the cake-basket, preventing the daughter from touching so much as a single piece; informing also in detail the punishment that would have been applied if she herself, in years gone by, had dared to express such a deplorable aspiration. Love, said Mrs. Enefer, and love alone was the excuse for marriage, and everything else led to disaster. Speaking of disaster, she was now willing, her cup being again filled, to hear all about the sad affliction which Winnie's mistress had, not so very long since, sustained. They seemed more particular nowadays; in her far-off youth every village had its looney.

"On the very morning he had to be put away," explained Winnie, "there came a letter to say money had been left to him, and this lump sum was paid over to her almost at once. She'd been saying things about him, complaining and arguing what selfish creatures men were, going off their heads and leaving their wives almost unprovided for, when the news

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came, and it brightened her up tremendously. And that's the way rewards are given out in this world. That's the world's idea of justice. I tell her sometimes she's got the luck that some other woman deserves."

Mrs. Enefer was about to give an opinion when her daughter interrupted with a question.

"She's making some of it fly," replied Winnie, "by gadding about, but most of it she's spending on jewellery. Good jewellery, mind you; I will say that for her. Not things like you two are wearing, but stuff that's always worth the money paid for it. Or very near. She's got so much of it that I tell her it isn't safe to keep it here. After all, though, that's her affair, not mine. I can't be bothered to argue with her!" She gave to the fire such a generous supply from the coal scuttle that Mrs. Enefer's economical mind prompted a shriek of appeal. "I'm booked for life in a nice easy berth, and all I've got to do is to keep on good terms with her. She's easily managed, that's one good thing, and she's very generous to me. I get eighteen now. Father —I wrote another long letter to him only last night— father is sharing the benefit of it."

"And the others?" suggested Miss Enefer.

"It's no good to a girl," said Mrs. Enefer curtly, "to be in a place like this. It isn't training. At your age you ought not to be spoilt in this way. You'll need a lot of drilling to get you right again. How are you getting on with your gymnastics?"

The visitors took advantage of the occasion to go over the house, and the elder lady's principal criticism was directed to defects on the part of the maid, criticism accepted by that young woman with serenity, and



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indeed with a certain amount of pride. In Mrs. Shorley's bedroom some of the recent purchases had been carelessly left by their owner, and the two visitors gazed with a rapt air at a necklace which had cost, so they were informed, so much as twenty-five guineas. Miss Enefer, with a sigh, remarked that at present she had only succeeded in putting away one-third of that sum as a contribution to the household which would have to be considered directly Mr. Chapman said the word. Winnie, by production of a Savings Bank book, proved that her hoardings exceeded those of her friend.

"You seem to have taken lumps of it out at various times," remarked Miss Enefer, glancing at the early pages. "If you'd only left it in instead!"

Winnie snatched the book from her hand.

Mrs. Enefer said that in her young days she had known finer and better houses, but in recent years it had not been her fortune to come across many exceeding this in style and in comfort. New methods had come since the days that Enefer, bless his heart, opened the shop in Kentish Town on the very day of the wedding. Nineteen and eight they took the first day; not so bad, considering. Enefer's elder brother, the chef whom Winnie had met, found all his money paid back in less than six months, long before the boy came to town. At the time she was all for the Prussians, and Enefer was all for the French, and when one wanted to irritate and give annoyance to the other, the Marseillaise (on one side) was hummed and (on the other) The Watch on the Rhine. But what Mrs. Enefer wanted to say was, that for cleanliness and appearance

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and comfort, give her a horsehair sofa with a black cushion and a white antimacassar to intervene between it and the greased or pomatumed head; this in preference to the cretonne-covered settee in the Torriano Avenue drawing-room. Mrs. Enefer drew a forefinger along the mantelpiece and gazed at the result thoughtfully. Winnie said in a casual way that she had been promising the room a good turn-out for some time past.

"Bother the bell!" she cried, interrupting herself. "Who on earth can that be? Let them ring again."

"It's uncle," cried Miss Enefer, after inspection from the window. "He was coming to us, but we wrote and put him off because, as we told him, we'd arranged to come on here. Fancy his taking all this trouble! Great compliment to you."

"We're not putting ourselves out quite so much about him now," explained the mother confidentially. "He happened to mention in course of conversation the other day that he should be very sorry to be anything but a bachelor, and that shows what's in his mind. Who the lady is, goodness only knows. Some foreign person, I suppose, at his hotel. We all know what they're like. I'll pop down and let him in."

The uncle entered the drawing-room with astonishing vivacity, kissing his niece and saying humorously that he supposed he had better treat Winnie in the same manner; she retorted with advice to attempt nothing of the kind unless he took a relish in having his face slapped. When he ceased affecting extreme terror, he said that a girl with no spirit about her was

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in his opinion, not worth being called a girl, and from this subject went, with no intervening stages, to that of the possibility of a General Election in June. He objected to General Elections on the ground that they interfered with appetites; if the leaders of either party were in that room, standing by the fireplace, he should not hesitate to tell them so in the briefest possible phrases. Talking even more rapidly, the uncle proceeded to give to the interested ladies a dress rehearsal, as it were, of the dialogue, wherein statesmen offered arguments in favour of an appeal to the country, arguments so feeble that the other party to the discussion had no sort of difficulty in knocking them over and making them sprawl ludicrously. To listen to Uncle Enefer arguing in favour of the Liberals was a Conservative education.

"No idea you went in for politics, uncle."

"I hold opinions, my dear," he replied mysteriously.

"Your uncle is not such a fool as to mix himself up publicly in such nonsense."

"Might!" he said. "What do you say, missie?"

"If you've got nothing better to do."

"That's just it!" he cried. "She's hit the nail right on the head." He looked at Winnie admiringly. "I'm taking things rather easily now, and if I don't find an interest in something I shall get too rusty to live. One or two friends have been suggesting that I should put up for the Board of Guardians as a start, and to tell you the truth," turning again to Winnie, "I came on here specially to talk about it."

"What I always say is——" began Mrs. Enefer.

"But to tell the truth again, I was looking forward

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to seeing you down in your kitchen with the dresser and rows of blue plates and white dishes at the back of you, and me seated on a wooden chair and having a chat with you across the deal table. That's what I'd got in my mind, and I don't mind admitting it." Mrs. Enefer explained. "I should like to look at that kitchen before I go on to the hotel," he said, rubbing his silk hat with a coat sleeve, "whether the lady of the house is in or whether she's out. I'm rather bent on it. Might possibly get an idea or two out of it for a new house I think of building."

"Winnie," said Mrs. Enefer, "let's show him the kitchen. He's like his poor dear brother: stupid and obstinate to a degree. Come on! Let's humour him and all go down."

"You two stay where you are," he ordered. "Little missie here will tell me all I want to know. You two can look after each other in the meantime, and both keep an eye on my hat."

Winnie apologised for a certain appearance of carelessness downstairs, and as she talked snatched here at a duster, there at scattered cubes of firewood. The chef put on spectacles and went round the kitchen saying rather incoherently, "Quite so!" and "Naturally, naturally!" and "That stands to reason!" Presently he rapped twice on the bare table, and cleared his throat with a cough. Winnie, kneeling at the fireplace with a brush in her hand, looked over her shoulder. He rested knuckles on the table.

"Any thoughts of getting married?" he asked. She smiled. "That's good," he declared, with relief. "Better than I expected. Now let me see, what's

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your exact age? But there, it's immaterial. Guess what mine is."

"You'll be offended if I guess right."

"That's just it," he admitted readily. "I've got to the age when I don't care about mentioning it myself, and when I'm not over-anxious for anyone else to speak about it. Now look here, it's no use talking too much. That isn't your style, and it isn't mine. Have you got—excuse me speaking plainly—is there—— I asked the question before, but I've got to ask it again."

"If you must know," said Winnie, "there was a young gentleman, and I offended him, and off he went. It's the only worry I've got just now. Daresay he'll come back if ever I call him."

"This is working out simply wonderful. Now we're getting to it. Tell you what I want. I want a house of my own, and I want someone to sit at the end of my dining-table." He rubbed the top of his head furiously with his handkerchief. "That's what I want. Now, listen to what I'm going to say. Supposing a girl's eighteen and a little more. How would it be for her to be educated for about a year or so, private governess sort of thing, and the pianoforte or the violin, just whichever she fancied, and at the end of that time—— I read about a similar case in a book the other evening, and it turned out uncommonly well. It isn't so much the question of a family, you understand me; I just want a wife. What's your answer?"

"No!" she said, looking at him. "My answer is 'No!'"

He gazed at the table and played a tune on it with

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the fingers of one hand. "Where did I put my hat?" he asked. "Left it upstairs? Come along. We'll go up and see what mischief they've got into. I say!" He took her hand and gasped. "I expect I haven't introduced the subject in the right way. Ought to have been more cautious."

"Wouldn't have made any difference," she said gently.

"Only, what I thought was that it would be such a fine chance for you, if you were free and getting tired of domestic service. No offence intended," said the chef, holding out his hand.

"No offence taken!" she declared earnestly.

She waved a good-bye to the three at the gate and went back to the window of the drawing-room, where her leisurely attitude goaded maids opposite into a state of desperation. There was something very comfortable in the thought and the memory of what had just happened. For the first time a man—not a young man, true, but a man—had told her he was willing and anxious to share all the rest of his life with her; ready to marry her and to keep her, and see that she never wanted anything; to pay out of his own pocket for every garment she wore, and for every omnibus and train in which she rode, and all this because he was a man and she a girl, and he admired her. It all seemed wonderful, wonderful. She remembered when he had entered the room on the night of the party in Castle Street, she nearly gave way to a burst of merriment; she had no such inclination now, but only a feeling of deep regard. On the wall were portraits of Miss Norreys, of Miss Kate

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Vaughan, and other popular ladies; she had always known these were pursued and worshipped; fine to think that she, Winnie Garland, in service at Torriano Avenue, Tufnell Park, N.W., shared with them the power of exciting admiration.

"We've all got a chance!" she said.

A telegraph messenger came along the road, looking at the odd numbers. Watching him, she said that if his hair were dark he undoubtedly brought a message of importance to her; the cards last night said that a dark man was to bring good news. The boy did come in at her gate, and she flew downstairs to take the envelope from him.

"Bah!" she cried, disappointed.

It was addressed to Mrs. Shorley, and the boy demanding "Any answer?" she opened it. The message, unsigned, said, "Tickets for theatre; come Charing Cross clock seven-thirty to-night; not evening dress."

Winnie went back to her easy-chair near the window, where she began to fan herself, not because of warmth, but because it gave an appearance and a sensation of luxury. This was better than Masters's, whether below the shop or behind the counter. Better, considerably better, than anything that had happened before Masters's, although certain moments of success at school in Farncombe Street came near; especially the interview with the head-mistress on leaving. A good world this, that required but a little time to tone down and sometimes erase incidents which at the moment of their happening seemed likely to remain for ever. Arthur Lord could be imagined returning

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penitent and adoring. Her own brother Bert, as she saw him, topped the clouds, and slapped Lord Roberts on the back. Kate, loud and noisy perhaps, but then Kate was naturally loud and noisy, and this might be nothing more than a habit easily acquired at the bar; it gave no reason for suspecting the existence of a heart that was not generous and, in a way, sisterly. In the brothers, too, of the first family, and the aunts, a certain brusqueness of manner, common to those living near the riverside, formed no sufficient reason for treating them as though they were outcasts; their bouts with the law were, after all, struggles wherein they found themselves seriously, one might say unfairly, handicapped, for on the one hand, folk who had, in some way or other, obtained possession of property, took most elaborate safeguards in regard to it, policing it, watching it, placing it under stout lock and reliable key; and if, in these circumstances, they found themselves deprived of a certain portion, why, this was only what happened in every game played by civilised and uncivilised nations. Winnie, hugging knees, sketched out an idea of holding another family meeting, this time by permission of Mrs. Shorley, at Torriano Avenue, where, over a sociable cup, the question of doing something for father could be discussed without heat or rancour. She felt she had never completely carried out the promise to her dear mother; the want of success that had attended previous efforts formed no excuse for giving up the attempt. Meanwhile, here was a good world, and the people in it were genially disposed towards her, and this was a very comfortable chair in which she sat.

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When she awoke, darkness had filled the room, and she could hear no sound. Over in the direction of Holloway the sky lighted up in a manner that would have suggested to a stranger the presence of a big fire, but Winnie knew her London. She went over the house. Mrs. Shorley had not returned, and when she did come would now be too late to take advantage of the offer contained in the telegram.

The area door appeared to have been left open (carelessness), but so far as she could ascertain by the aid of the lighted candle which she protected from the mischievous efforts of the wind, no one had come down the steps. She bolted the door on the inside, and considered the question of a run round, say out into Camden Road, up Camden Road to St. Bartholomew Road, through St. Bartholomew Road to Carleton Road, and so home; the house would be as safe without her as with her.

"Means going upstairs to fetch my hat and cloak," she said doubtfully.

A creaking sound came, and, making the sibilant noise used to frighten animals, she listened for the pattering of a sudden disappearance. This did not reach her ears. Never easily frightened, she went on with preparations for her supper. Glancing up, she saw that a constable had stopped, and was looking through the railings; she went over and let the blind down with a rush, remarking, "Impudent bobby!" As she rinsed a bundle of watercress in the scullery a noise came of something falling on a floor above. She took the brass candlestick, and went up.

"You startled me," protested Jim over his shoulder.

"About time," she retorted.

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He stood at Mrs. Shorley's dressing-table; a small hand-lamp had its back to the window, and the light of it caught his features. He whistled softly, and went on with his task.

"Stop that!" she ordered. "Stop that at once, and come here. What do you think you're up to?"

"Just having a look round," replied Jim. "'Tisn't only females that have got curiosity. You bunk oft downstairs, my girl; and, if you wish it, I'll come and tie you in a chair and fasten a handkerchief over your mouth. That'll clear you all right."

"You'll do nothing of the kind."

"Please yourself," amiably. "I only suggested it in order to protect what I may call your interests. What I thought was, it would save your face. Whereabouts were you when I came in? I thought the place was deserted. Your mistress—I 'eard she'd had money left her—has gone to the theatre, I suppose?"

"I ought to have guessed," said the girl self-reproachfully. "You sent that telegram."

"I never sent no telegram," replied Jim. "But I will say this for her" with a fine air of impartiality "that there's a very nice little collection here, and anyone who contradicts me is a liar."

"You got the address out of father, I suppose?"

"Where did I put my bag?" said Jim wonderingly. "Where on earth—— Why, here it is, close to me foot all the time." He laughed. "'Where's my bag?' I says, and all the time it was close to me foot."

"Put these things back where you found them. Put every one of them back before I count three. Do you hear?"

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"Want a bash over the 'ead?"

"You're afraid!" she said defiantly. "You always were the coward of the family." She began. "One. Two."

"I can tell from the way you talk," said Jim acutely, "that there's someone downstairs. You've got a follower, that's what you've got. Wonder you're not ashamed, a girl like you. It isn't right. It isn't proper. You'll get yourself talked about. If that poor mother of yours——"

"You've done yourself a bad turn by reminding me of her," she exclaimed. He begged her not to raise her voice. "There's a policeman outside."

"Best place for him."

She affected to go, and he rushed across the room to catch her arm. A deep cupboard had one door open; Winnie gave him a sudden twist, sending him within; closed the door and shot the bolt. He roared that he would smash the panels (giving the usual adjectives to the noun); she told him he could not perform this feat, and he inferentially admitted this by begging her not to be a silly (again a free and generous use of adjectives). A key turned in the front door below, and she offered him the information that her mistress had returned; chances of safety depended upon silence. Quickly she replaced the bracelets and necklaces and chains in the drawer; gave an appearance of order to the dressing-table, and going out met her mistress on the landing. Mrs. Shorley had experienced a tiring day, what with one duty and another, but she had seen the Princess of Wales twice; in Oxford Street had

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been greatly tempted by a jeweller's window; in Tottenham Court Road a foreign gentleman lifted his hat and asked the way to Goodge Street.

"Help me with my hat pins," she begged. "I feel ready to drop. And get my best slippers, there's a dear; they're in the cupboard over there."

"You needn't wear the best to-night," said Winnie; "there'll be no callers." She found another pair in the corner of the room. "Put these on!"

"You order me about," complained Mrs. Shorley, "as though you were the mistress and I was the maid. And you're wrong for once in saying that there wouldn't be any callers, for there's the bell ringing. Run down and see who it is."

"Come down with me."

"No, Garland," rebelliously. "If I don't rest for a few minutes I shall get one of my bad headaches. All this wear and tear is more than I can possibly endure. If I had the strength of a traction engine it would be different."

The girl, perplexed and anxious, flew, promising herself to return with the least delay possible. The constable who had peered into the kitchen was waiting at the door, and immediately that it opened stepped inside.

"Out you go," ordered Winnie, exerting her strength. "You're not wanted here."

"Hush!" begged the policeman, "I don't want to pay attentions. That's not my idea. Duty first. There's a suspicious-looking character that I've been watching."

"I know," she interrupted in a whisper. "It's

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all right; he's my brother. He's been upstairs for some time."

"Not the one I mean. He's only this minute gone down into your kitchen." She put one hand against the side of the wall; the constable turned the light of his bull's-eye on her face. "One of our men is watching outside," he went on,—"how white you look; there's nothing to be afraid of—and unless there's a way out of the back, he can't possibly escape."

Winnie asked to be allowed to fly up and tell her mistress; the constable said too many women in a case like this were likely to ruin sport, and ordered her to run out on the leads from the window, halfway up the staircase, give a look around at the back garden, and report to him. He placed his helmet on a knob of the hat-stand, and shifting his waistbelt said this that was about to happen would do him a bit of good. Winnie from the window shook her head negatively and pointed to the stairs leading to the kitchen. She had no sympathy with Jim; shameful that he should have come here; but if it came to a question of Jim or another man, then Jim might as well be dispatched with a caution; the temporary detention in the cupboard would perhaps have an effect upon him. She and the constable communicated by further signals, and he went down.

"Garland!" called her mistress in a complaining voice. "Garland! Garland! Why don't you answer? What's the matter down there? Tiresome girl you are, to be sure!"

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The constable returned and indicated that his search had been unsuccessful. He was about to go up the next flight when Winnie stopped him and offered to give him assistance in a second effort; he hesitated, but she did not wait for him to decide, and he followed her doubtfully. The gas-jet flared in the kitchen, and in no corners there could anyone hide; she went into the scullery and taking off the lid of the copper gave a short dig with the stick.

"I shall be a sergeant before you now," she said, announcing her discovery.

"Come on out of it," he ordered sharply to the contents of the copper. "You're not the weekly wash." The bundle inside made an awkward attempt to obey, and Winnie gave another prod with the stick. The bundle begged in a growling voice that she should take greater care; she started back and, dropping the stick, placed both hands before her eyes.

"What's your game?" demanded the policeman. The man assisted to uncoil himself, stood up in the copper, presenting an absurd suggestion of one about to deliver a sermon. "What do you think you're up to?"

"Paying a visit."

"You'll pay another before you're much older."

"Come 'ere to see my sister."

"Ah!" remarked the policeman acutely. "Wrong house, I suppose."

"No! Right house."

"Don't you let him frighten you," advised the constable, turning to Winnie. "This is an old trick.

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You needn't say anything at all; only just leave him to me."

"One moment," said Winnie, shivering. "It's true what he says. Quite true. He is my half-brother. His name's William."

The constable hesitated a moment, and then took out his book and tore two pages. Gave a pencil to Winnie and ordered her to write her full name. Ordered the man to also write her full name. Compared the two, and sighed.

"My helmet's upstairs," he said. "This is one of those cases where it's a trifle too risky to run anyone in. I've been bitten once, and I mustn't get bitten again. But," turning suddenly, "don't you fancy for a moment, miss, that I believe he's your brother."

"Please yourself," said Winnie.

"And I shall talk it over with some of the chaps, and see whether your mistress ought not to be warned about the way you're carrying on."

"If there's anything stupid that can be done," she remarked, "no doubt you'll manage to do it."

"By the bye," as he was going, "you told me as distinctly as you could speak that your so-called brother was upstairs. Upstairs, you said."

"Go along," said Winnie, patting him on the shoulder chidingly. "You're getting mixed. Thanks for being a good sort and not making a fuss. You might take him with you if you don't mind."

She shook hands with William, and asked him to give her love to father. He managed to say, in a rapid undertone, "Jim's a interfering sort of chap this was my

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show I sent the telegram better luck next time," and followed the constable.

There remained the question of Jim, and she went up with all the calmness she could provide to give explanation of some kind to Mrs. Shorley, and to induce that lady to leave the room. Stopped halfway, clutched by a sudden fear that she was acting unwisely. Ought she not to have taken the opportunity to punish the two, allowing both to be locked up, and refraining from giving them her protection? A moment's consideration assured her that although she had acted upon impulse, impulse had prompted her aright, and if she had acted in any other way, father would have been compelled to take up an attitude of open animosity; she must keep friends with father. If they found trouble when she was not at hand to interpose, the responsibility would not be hers. Winnie reminded herself that never again must father be trusted with an address.

"Only a caller," she announced. Her brain was awhirl with anxiety.

"I won't have you chattering in the hall," said Mrs. Shorley, with a sudden exhibition of masterfulness. "If I find you doing that again, Garland, you'll have to leave!"

"I can leave now," she retorted swiftly, "if you pay me up to the day. Give me my character, and I'll leave now."

"I don't wish to go so far as that."

"But I do!"

Mrs. Shorley craned herself from the chair and suggested that Winnie should provide her with some-



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thing to eat in the dining-room; later, they could talk matters over and come to an amicable arrangement. As she went Winnie unbolted the cupboard.

"Surely you're not going to leave a good place like this," whispered Jim anxiously. "Keep your senses about you!"

She pointed a quivering finger to the doorway, and he crept out.

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## CHAPTER X

" Shop windows of town !
Though folk sometimes treat you
As mirrors, and greet you
With doubt or a frown,
You're always good-tempered,
Shop windows of town ! "

" THEY won't be satisfied," whispered the frightened girl, despairingly, to Mrs. Enefer, " until they've done for me ! "

The son Moltke had fetched her box (heavier than before) from Torriano Avenue on a hand-cart, bringing with it a tearful apology of equal measurements, but, so far as Winnie was concerned, of less weight. An added message was to the effect that, providing Winnie had fully made up her mind, then Mrs. Shorley would always be willing to give a satisfactory answer to any inquiries. The girl did not weep when Mrs. Enefer, hugging her, allowed her to rest a head on a matronly shoulder, urging her to remember that, apart from the occasional existence of luck, which had at times bowed in her direction, and might again take notice of her, it was never to be said that a woman had been outwitted by man or by men, for an admission of this kind would disarrange and possibly upset the entire scheme of the universe.



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"You're safe here, at any rate, my sweet," said Mrs. Enefer, taking up a less militant argument. "If they should find out where you are, and come kicking up a to-do in Castle Road, my boy, child as he is, will get a friend or two together, and make them bitterly regret they were ever born. But I do wish, my dear, you'd have a good cry!"

In regard to Mrs. Shorley and to Mrs. Shorley's jewellery, Winnie experienced a keen feeling of regret and apprehension, until Miss Enefer, by an unexpected burst of intelligence, at ten o'clock found a solution. Miss Enefer suggested that an unsigned postcard should be sent to Torriano Avenue, containing a definitely worded warning to place the valuable articles in the hands of a reliable company, so that if Jim or his brother, or both, should repeat the essay, they might be successful in finding nothing of any greater account than furniture, which they would have a difficulty in taking away, and disappointment which they would be unable to leave behind. All the same, Winnie, sleeping with Miss Enefer, perturbed that young woman greatly by starting up at the hour of two in the morning and crying, "Police! police! Oh, make haste! make haste!" Mrs. Enefer came in to take up again the task of soothing her and mothering her, and declared that it would all come right soon. Winnie awoke when the cart left for Covent Garden in the company of a horse that had to be charged before starting with most of the crimes in the calendar, and from that hour until the moment when her hostess brought an early cup of tea she had a swift succession of those dreams which come in the morning, with everybody taking a prominent

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position in the melodrama: her mother reproaching her for not taking greater care of father, and begging her never to forget the promise; Mr. Shorley taking a side in the argument, despite Winnie's pleadings that his mental derangement cancelled the value of his assistance; and Miss Clements (that was), perched on the snowy top of a mountain, calling an appeal to leave them, and to come and give her a hand. Winnie, just before the snap of wakefulness came, was trying to keep them all in order because the white-surpliced choir from the High Church came in procession, singing "Brightest and best are the sons of the morning." The tall vicar with fingers of both hands making a capital A gave a reproachful look, as he followed the heavy, gilded cross; coming near he stopped, and bending asked whether she had been telling the truth; she tried to explain to him that any lapses were of such small importance as to be deserving of no comment or recognition, but the words would not come. Miss Ladbrook, whom she had not hitherto noticed, ran after the vicar, asking to be informed his very lowest charge, with discount usual to the trade, for marrying her to Mr. Furley, of Cricklewood, disputing the sum in a most unladylike manner, and threatening, on account of the expense, to take Mr. Furley to a registrar's. Jim and his brother rushed in and snatched at the cross, and she tried, without success, to scream and call attention; she struck out at them, and, later, Miss Enefer at the washstand discovered a bruise which, as she pointed out, would prevent her for a time from wearing an evening dress, supposing she possessed one.

The early cup of tea, hot and strong, proved a

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remedy for imagined disasters and a palliative for troubles which were real. Mrs. Enefer, sitting at the side of the bed, protested against the hurry that Winnie's proposal entailed; declaring she herself had not had an outing since goodness knew when; she had almost forgotten what the interior of a drapery establishment was like. There existed no reason that Mrs. Enefer could see, even with the aid of spectacles, why Winnie should put her name down at once at Miss Orpen's; the girl answered that she did not intend to go there again, but to try some distant establishment of a similar nature. Mrs. Enefer begged her not to think of the south side of the river, and Winnie agreed to keep to the north, without, at present, pledging her word to the exact and particular district.

Mrs. Enefer gave, at various times during the morning, a list of the articles of which, by reason of long abstinence from shopping, she stood in urgent need, and Winnie wrote them with a rough and approximate estimate of the cost of each; the total did not stagger Mrs. Enefer, who relished the pure joy of anticipation of leaning an elbow on a counter, inspecting calicoes, testing the quality between finger and thumb, and shaking a head doubtfully. The daughter, bribed with promise (not dated) of some treat (not specified), agreed to look after the shop for one whole afternoon; her brother, hearing of the expedition, asserted that for a cherry stone he would smarten himself up, put on a clean collar, and come with them. His mother lost no time in retorting that he might safely assume that his company could

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always be dispensed with unless he received a very distinct assurance to the contrary. Children should be seen and not heard.

"Merely a suggestion," remarked the large young man excusingly.

"Don't push yourself forward, Moltke," ordered his mother. "Nothing looks worse in a boy than to be always intruding where he's not wanted. Go and wash your face and hands, and come and show them to me when you've done it!"

They left with the intention of giving a certain amount of custom to the establishment of R. O. Masters, where Winnie hoped to see the baby. Arrived in Fortess Road, they found the shop closed and a notice on the shutters to the effect that "The entire stock of this well-known Drapery Emporium has been bought by Jessup & Co., of High Street, Islington." Winnie rang at the side door and the servant answered, exclaiming at once—

"Oh, I say, is that you?"

And, on receiving an answer in the affirmative, begged them to come downstairs for a chat. This declined, the young woman, now without a hook or an eye in company with each other, reeled off a quantity of information at the doorstep, prefacing with the remark that she had to tell them of the most remarkable series of jokes that had ever yet come to her notice. First, that R. O. had gone, sloped, disappeared, done a bunk, vanished, taken his departure; the girl said that if R. O. had only asked her, she could have warned him against the foolishness of backing Terrible Turk. In her opinion

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(the event being now past) Terrible Turk never had the ghost of a chance: she herself would as soon have thought of putting money on a horse belonging to the North Metropolitan Tramways Company. On Winnie expressing frank astonishment at the powers of speech and the signs of intelligence shown by the young person, she found herself promptly informed that it was not the hen who cackled the most that laid the largest egg. Certainly, now that the round-eyed girl had decided to fall into line in regard to vocal expression, she showed considerable eloquence, resenting interruption, and pausing only to take fresh supplies of breath; by the device of placing one slippered foot against the door, she foiled the occasional efforts of the visitors to make escape. The bailiffs were in, and all the young ladies, Miss Ladbrook, Miss Connor, and Miss Baker, the apprentice, had left. Two of these were upset at the time of going, but Miss Ladbrook, it appeared, looked upon it all as a direct and tactful interposition of Providence; for, the crisis being explained to her youngish gentleman, now become a traveller for a wholesale firm near Edgware Road, he showed recklessness, decided to throw away caution, and said that, instead of allowing the event to hang over his head, the marriage might as well take place at once.

"So she's all right," chattered the servant. "Naturally enough, she was very high and mighty about it all, but I've got no grudge against her; she give me eighteenpence. And she says, 'Oh,' she says, 'if you should ever see poor Winnie——'"

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"Poor Winnie?"

"I'm giving you her words! 'If you should ever pop across poor onfortunate Winnie——'"

"You're making this up as you go along."

"'Poor, foolish, onfortunate Winnie, give her my address, and ask her to give me a call.'"

"Well," said Winnie, with abruptness, "where is it?"

"You shall have it before you go. There's lots more to tell you."

"Do you imagine," demanded Winnie, "that me and my friend have got nothing better to do than to stay here in this draughty place and listen to you? And pin up your blouse, do!"

"Let me see; where was I? Surely you've grown a bit taller than what you was when you were 'ere."

Winnie gave permission to the girl to continue.

"I've had an offer," went on the girl, "to go and help in a shop; an aunt of mine has a baker's and post office combined in Somers Town, but I don't know; there's worse things than domestic service when you come to think it over calmly. But," noting that Mrs. Enefer was about to speak, "I was about to tell you! Mrs. Masters is still down at I always forget the name of the place and a distant friend of hers has been up to look round, and she says the boy's getting on a treat."

"A dear baby!" said Winnie impulsively. "Best little chum I ever had. Whenever I find myself bothered, I always wish he was about to put his arms round my neck!"

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"But nothing seems to do her any good; apparently she's in a decline. They're keeping the news from her. I think she ought to be told; that's my opinion. I've been asked to stay on, and I'm doing it to oblige the family. I have a few friends in of an evening, and it suits me all right for the time being. What I should like to do would be to get a place as parlour-maid in a good house, either a titled family or else a family with money. There was something else," gazing at the pattern of the wall paper in the effort to arouse memory, "something else I had to tell you; but it's gone."

"Go and get that address," ordered Winnie. "You'll want a voice lozenge after all this, or else a holiday abroad."

"It was something in connection with abroad that I wanted to mention. But that's me all over," said the girl, almost proudly, in going. "Half my time I don't know whether I'm on my 'ead or my 'eels!"

Mrs. Enefer's proposition was that an escape should be instantly effected; but Winnie thought there would be no harm in securing the information concerning Miss Ladbrook; there might, she said, be something hanging to it. The girl returned with a card, and Winnie and Mrs. Enefer, after bidding her good-bye, inspected it; Mrs. Enefer said that the Crescent was just off Hampstead Road; her brother-in-law lived there; Miss Ladbrook had evidently gone into furnished lodgings. Winnie remarked this was a skimpy way of beginning married life, and had to be informed that it by

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no means counted for cheapness, for a clever landlady keeping one servant could make a neat fortune out of such a house.

"Hard place for a girl to be in."

"That may be," conceded Mrs. Enefer. "But just think how good it is for the girl. If I ever kept one, I should always try to bear that in mind. In the long run she'd thank me for it."

The maid caught them at the Bull and Gate corner, congratulating herself, in panting sentences, on the possession of an alert mind, and handed to Winnie a square envelope bearing the postmark of Quebec. It had been on the mantelpiece for some time, and only the difficulty of deciding whether to return it to the postman or throw it in the dust-hole had prevented the girl from taking some definite step. Rolling her apron in such a manner that it concealed the bareness of one arm, she seemed inclined to give a further exhibition of conversational powers, but Winnie, placing the letter in a skirt pocket for attention at some more favourable moment, ordered her to return at once and to give first attention to the discovery of a cap which bore a nearer resemblance to whiteness than that worn by her at the moment.

The two devoted themselves to a great afternoon. They had what Mrs. Enefer called a stay in the shape of cake and coffee in Park Street, Camden Town, and taking an omnibus that was prepared, if they had desired, to take them so far as Waterloo, stepped out at Oxford Circus and went along in the direction of Hyde Park, examining closely the

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contents of shop windows, where the proprietors seemed able to think in guineas only, and going farther west, found establishments where articles of something like a similar appearance could be found, and pounds were absent from the price cards, shillings reasonable, and (for compensation) pence demanded up to the uttermost farthing. Winnie had one or two chats with the assistants, conveying the fact that she once occupied a position on their side of the counter, and contriving to intimate that those were dark and murky days compared with her present life; the ladies seemed gratified by her condescension, and there could be no doubt that she herself found in this encouragement and a perfect dismissal of all worries. Mrs. Enefer wondered how it was possible to keep the features straight when talking in this manner; Winnie replied that she found it easy. On Mrs. Enefer's expenditure reaching the sum of two pounds, including something useful for her companion, shopping ceased for the day, and only abstract purchases were thereafter made; these mainly in New Bond Street, and including a handsome set of furs, and a diamond tiara that made one's mouth and eyes water; the fur cloak was being worn by a tall lady of such extreme haughtiness of appearance that half the joy in purchasing would have been in the knowledge that one was depriving her of it. Winnie had to admit that there existed disparity in height; she told her companion that if she could but grow one more inch she would feel satisfied and entirely content. Mrs. Enefer agreed that a tendency existed

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amongst the folk in the neighbourhood where they found themselves to become taller than ordinary people, but pointed out that increase in height did not always mean an addition of commonsense or moral worth, and instanced the case of a young butcher at Highgate in '74 who, although well over six feet, ran away to Australia with his master's wife.

"Bert's tall," contended Winnie, "and there's no good reason why I shouldn't be. My profession is different from his. In mine, unless you're a decent height, you remain a general till you get married." She sighed.

"Does he write often, my dear?"

"You mean Arthur Lord?"

"No, no, no," said Mrs. Enefer irritably. "I mean your brother Bert."

"He's the worst correspondent you can possibly imagine," acknowledged the girl. "I write to him, but if he answers one in six he thinks he's doing well. I suppose he's going on all right down at Shorncliffe, or else—— 'Scuse me!"

Winnie returned from the wild rush across Oxford Street, her eyes big with excitement, scarcely listening either to Mrs. Enefer's pious thanks for the safe crossing, or the same lady's reproof for daring behaviour in speaking to a soldier in a public thoroughfare. Winnie had observed a man belonging to Bert's regiment, and no rule of etiquette, known or unknown, would be likely to prevent her from speaking. Winnie said to him, "Pardon me, but could you happen to tell me anything about

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Private Garland?" The soldier stopped and, touching his cap with his cane, said, "No, miss, I can't." Winnie implored him to think, and the soldier rubbed the end of the cane into the back of his head. "You don't mean Private Garland," he said, "you mean Corporal Garland." Winnie begged the soldier to give to the promoted comrade a sister's love, and the soldier, turning a ring on his finger to serve as reminder, promised to do so.

"But fancy him," she cried delightedly, as they turned into a tea-shop, "fancy him never writing to tell me. That's Bert all over! I don't mind now. Wasn't it odd that we should at that very moment——"

"Hush!" interrupted Mrs. Enefer. Ladies at the tables looking up on hearing the loud voice raised eyebrows. "Don't forget we're amongst the aristocracy. What about your letter, my dear?"

The envelope, opened carefully with the aid of a hairpin, contained news of a value faintly expressed by stamps in the corner. Miss Clements, become Mrs. Dray, wrote to her dear Winnie, beginning with the usual preliminaries, and expressing a hope that her letter would be answered at the earliest possible moment. She would have written before, but that the task of furnishing the house in Descorrières Street had engaged a good deal of time, and the enclosed photograph of herself would explain the filling up of certain other hours. (The photograph gave her in shortish skirts, with gun in hand, resolution in every feature.) Followed two pages of thin letter-paper, giving information that might have been, and probably had been, copied from a guide-book, with such words

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as imports and exports and revenue and Fahrenheit, that conveyed but little to the mind of the reader. Mrs. Enefer, looking over Winnie's shoulder, counselled turning to the end.

"Now I must tell you something that Mr. Dray and myself have often talked of since we have been here. He spoke to you about it before we left, but you did not appear to take much notice, and he is not sure whether or not you considered the matter afterwards. Since then I have heard from Miss Ladbrook, and she told me all about the trouble you had with your people."

"Chatterbox!" remarked Winnie.

"What Mr. Dray suggests is this. He says it is only fair to tell you that over here domestic servants earn double as much as in England, and are very difficult to get. There is something else. Friends of his who paid the passage out for a girl from Devonshire found, when they met her, that she had become engaged on the steamer to a man who lived in the next house to them, and had promised to marry him within a month; certainly he refunded the amount, but they had taken all the trouble for nothing, and were compelled to visit her afterwards. Mr. Dray says that you, being still young, can be in no great hurry, and if you like to come out and help me for two years, you can bring your father with you, and he can do some light work about the house and in the garden. Your best plan will be to see him at once, and if you cable out the word 'Yes,' then Mr. Dray will make

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all the arrangements for booking passages on the earliest steamer, and there will be no time lost. You understand that Mr. Dray is taking some risk in making this offer, but I have told him I am sure your father will behave himself, and it will certainly be the making of you. When the two years are up, you can decide to stay on or not, just as you like.

"I must now conclude with best regards to you and kind remembrances to all friends. Please tell them that I am very happy, and that I do not in the least regret leaving England. Cable directly and write soon.—Your friend, NELLIE DRAY

"Do come, dear Winnie. It is so lonely here for me."

Mrs. Enefer said promptly that the Red Indians, of whom she had read in her youth, constituted, in her mind, a sufficient argument against emigration; if others were required, what about Brigham Young and the Mormons, and the notorious habit indulged in there of firing at one with a pistol when no other repartee suggested itself? On this, Winnie announced that she was well fitted to take care of herself wherever she happened to be, and nowhere would she feel so safe as in a country divided by thousands of miles of water from West Lane, Bermondsey. The part of the proposition concerning her father cleared up any difficulty that might otherwise have existed, and it would surely please her mother, looking down, to see them both journeying across the Atlantic Ocean. Bert could come out when he left the Army, and

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perhaps Mrs. Enefer herself, on the marriage of her daughter, might feel inclined for a change.

"Leave me out of it," snapped the lady. "Kentish Town may not be good enough for some people, but it's quite good enough for me. I was born there and I was married there; all I've got to do now is to die there, and the job will be finished. And if you've made up your mind, my dear, nothing that I say will influence you. You're a bit excited now; let's pay up and get home and consider it quietly."

One thing to talk of calm; another to practise it. Winnie asked the driver of the yellow omnibus whether he knew much about Canada, but it appeared the driver had not fully recovered from troubles of the great strike in the previous year, and he answered, "Never you mind about what I know or what I don't know. You thank your stars you can get from the Horse Shoe to the Boston without padding the hoof!" and declined to discuss any further the matter introduced by Winnie. This rebuff had no deterrent effect, nor did the fact that the driver told his two horses in partial confidence the treatment he would mete out to those who were messing old England about, check the wave of enthusiasm that possessed the girl. Before they reached their destination and she had said "Good-bye, Crosspatch!" to the driver, she was settled down in Quebec, her father wearing a silk hat on Sundays, and her brother Bert, the tried and trusted friend, the very right hand indeed, of the Governor-General. As they walked along Castle Road she shot a few grizzly bears and sent the skins home to Mrs. Enefer with love and best wishes.



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"Friend of yours in the upstairs back room," announced Miss Enefer, in serving two customers at once. "Mr. Chapman's gone to get something to smoke. Bought anything for me?"

Arthur Lord coming forward politely to assist with the parcels, received the information showered upon him with a dazed air; calling to give polite commiseration, he found himself invited to share a victory. Chapman, returning with seven cigars in an envelope, said he had just looked in to see how his own cold was, but speedily gave up this vein, accepted the news in a more appropriate manner, ejaculating that it beat cockfighting, that wonders would never cease, that things were happening nowadays with a rapidity which made one, on waking in the morning, nervous in regard to the coming day. A man in the Clearing House who drew the first horse in the Derby Sweepstake had gone off to Buenos Ayres with his winnings; a mean trick and, having omitted to stand treat to the department, good wishes had not accompanied him, but the instance showed that precedent existed in emigration; if Winnie should run across the Clearing House man, she was to be sure to say to him, "Hullo, Melton Mowbray!" a mystic allusion, which, Chapman declared, would send him raving mad. When Mrs. Enefer's brother called at seven o'clock to fetch a watch that he had left for attention (the cost in Kentish Town being threepence less than in his neighbourhood) he willingly paid off his hansom and joined the family council, for the full and ample consideration of Winnie's affairs.

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"We shall all be sorry to lose you, missie," he remarked, seating himself at the head of the table, "you can take your oath of that! Great thing now is to find out where we are."

The son of the establishment ventured to suggest that he should be allowed to join in the discussion; an unfortunate application, for his mother told him at once it was a matter for grown-ups and ordered him to look after the shop; he obeyed with a stare at Arthur Lord that had nothing of friendliness. Winnie sitting next to Arthur, and being in the best spirits, wooed him from his attitude of reserve and assured him privately that the difference which occurred at their last meeting was her fault, and her fault alone. The young man had thereupon to say that he had been blaming himself for it ever since; he could not at the moment give the exact number of sleepless nights which had resulted, but he had a full and complete record in the diary resting in the pocket of his other suit.

"We're friends now, at any rate," urged Winnie.

"I'll kiss you if you're not careful," he whispered.

Consoling and satisfactory to discover that she could so easily recall a straying admirer, and an illuminated glance from the uncle did not make her release her hand from Arthur Lord's affectionate clasp. Everything seemed as everything always should have been. A proper and a flattering interest shown in her present and in her future; a desire to smooth difficulties, a general feeling of optimism at a moment when she was optimistic. Would he go, was the important question? That was the point; would he go?

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The uncle's answer to this was that most certainly the father would go; what was there to stop him? Of course, he would go. Undoubtedly, he would go.

"If I might be allowed to suggest——" began Arthur Lord.

What, uncle went on, what could possibly happen better for him than to be taken out to a new country by a daughter of whom he was, naturally enough, fond, there to start a new life, with new surroundings, new friends, new everything? Why, the suggestion had only to be placed before him, and he would close with it ere the words were out of your mouth! And supposing that in the course of a few years there should come a desire to see, as the song said, the old folks at home, what easier than for the two, daughter and father, to pack up a bag or a portmanteau or a tin trunk, and run over here and pay a round of visits to everybody? The uncle knew a cousin, once a waiter in London, who was running an hotel in Quebec, and he had made a tidy fortune in three years and a half.

"What I've got in my mind at the present moment——" said Arthur.

If it came to a question of a pound or two for outfit, even though the sum should be more than a pound or two, the uncle thought he could see his way to that; Winnie, lifting her right arm as sign of a desire to speak, mentioned that she had a Post Office Savings Bank book, and the uncle said approvingly that here was the right and proper spirit; be independent so far as you could, but when you had to be indebted to

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somebody, be indebted to one who felt glad of the chance; in other words, was only too pleased to have the opportunity.

"Strikes me," said Lord again, "that we ought first of all to find out whether——"

Again interrupted, he beckoned to his friend Chapman, and the two went out, leaving the uncle to argue with an audience of ladies who had no thought of contradicting views so entirely in accord with their own. The uncle appeared in his chosen element in taking charge and in exercising powers of management. He was acquainted with a chief engineer on a steamer running from Liverpool; that steamer they had better take; the shipping company had their annual dinner at his hotel and never failed to send down a bottle of champagne for the chef. He could get an introduction to a man up at the end of Leadenhall Street who sold cabin trunks; that place they must patronise. Someone had once told him of a sure preventative against sea sickness; first thing to-morrow morning he would make it his business to reascertain the particulars. Mrs. Enefer wondered whether the size of these vessels implied a certain amount of danger, and the uncle was able to state that, according to statistics, you were safer on a liner than you were in trying to cross the narrow part of Hampstead Road. Mrs. Enefer decided that a fitting termination to an eventful day would be a crab for supper, and the uncle superintended the management of this.

The young men returned after an hour's absence, Arthur Lord with the information that he had taken the liberty of sending a wire to Bermondsey asking

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Winnie's father whether he was prepared to sail for Canada the following week in company with his daughter. The pre-paid reply had come to the post-office with satisfactory readiness—

"Most decidedly. (Signed) GARLAND"

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## CHAPTER XI

"Hard to behave as though one never cared,
Hard to believe we may not meet again.
London! recall the happiness we shared,
I have forgot the hurting and the pain."

IMPORTANCE accompanied her wherever she went, respect and consideration followed assiduously; in the glow of satisfaction she could not bear to punish any by keeping them in ignorance of the joyful news. Withdrawing money at the post office in Kentish Town Road, she told the young woman who served cash under the brass lattice work that she was leaving for Canada with father in a week's time; the conductor of every omnibus on which she rode to and from shopping expeditions was informed that in company with father she was in a week's time leaving for Canada; the news that she was leaving for Canada in a week's time with father was given with similar generosity to servants at gates with whom she had hitherto been only on staring acquaintance, and to Robert, the boy, formerly at R. O.'s, now free of the Board school, and engaged at the bookstall of Camden Road Station. Robert, in giving her permission to look through the illustrated journals on his stall, and offering to introduce her to



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a most superior chap in the booking-office, who read Huxley and Darwin and G. W. Foote, and could tell her the best and most direct way to travel from any given point to any given point, Robert alone, begged her to reconsider the decision. Robert nevertheless provided her with pen, ink, and paper, and she wrote to father, saying that the receipt of his telegram had given her great delight, and that, so soon as the berths were definitely booked, she would ask him to come up to town in order to visit the ready-made tailor who strongly recommended himself, with a rubicund, rollicking portrait, and a comic threat, "I Give you Fits," on the hoardings of the neighbourhood. The task of sending a cable to Quebec had been entrusted to Arthur Lord, chief amongst all who craved permission to help; general agreement afterwards in Castle Road on hearing the cost that the owners of the cable must be doing well.

See Winnie, if you please (in the desire to leave out none fairly entitled to good-byes), putting on new shoes intended for the voyage and calling at the Crescent to ask, with an air, if Mrs. Furley, formerly Miss Ladbrook, happened to be in. Mrs. Furley was taking a walk in Regent's Park, and the landlady added bitterly that it was well to be some to dandle in the lap of luxury, loll about on sofas, and to have no housework to do; for herself, left with no maid—the last having broken and smashed forty thousand cups and saucers; well, seven, to be precise, in the course of a week, and over the ensuing discussion bouncing out of the house with the swagger and importance usually attributed to Duchesses—with

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no maid, and every floor and every available room let, she scarcely knew where to begin; she could assure Winnie there was no possibility of ascertaining when she had finished.

"Tell you what!" went on the landlady, finding time, despite pressure, for conversation and the recital of woes. "The next one I get will have to turn back her sleeves and set to; I promise that."

"I'm leaving next week for Canada."

"The next one shall work like a nigger. I won't give her rest from the moment she puts foot inside the house. I'll keep her on the go, so sure as my name is Meers."

"For Canada," Winnie went on, "in company with my father, and I'm afraid I shan't have time to call again. Mention that I called, will you? Miss Garland, the name is."

"If I don't forget," promised Miss Meers. "How would it be for you to step upstairs and wait for a bit? I suppose I can trust you?"

"People do who know me."

"Excuse my putting the question," said Miss Meers, "but as I often say, you never know. I've been taken in over and over again; no wonder I'm next door to a pauper. Of course," correcting herself, "I'm not so badly off as all that. I've got a niece away at a boarding-school at Folkestone, and when she comes home here"—a proud tremor of the head—"nothing's good enough for her. Besides, I've got money put by. Put by in the bank. What's that you say?"

"I was saying that you seem to have your share of trouble."

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"First-floor front, please," said the landlady resentfully.

Winnie discovered in the usual surroundings of a boarding-house sitting-room some identifying signs of its present occupants: a framed photograph, for instance, of a group at some sports, with Miss Ladbrook presenting a coy and astonished air, but all the same seated well in front; also a portrait of Mrs. Furley, taken immediately after becoming Mrs. Furley, and unable to conceal triumph, with Mr. Furley in a frock-coat, cut rather too long and slightly too full, and looking at the camera with a scowl. On the top of a horsehair easy-chair a Gainsborough hat rested, and with the antimacassar below conveyed an idea of a flat, respectable lady taking rest. The end of a cigar hinted that Mr. Furley had not yet given up the reckless disbursement appropriate to a honeymoon. For the rest, the conventional ornaments (new to Winnie but old to themselves) of a neighbourhood where tenants come and go, birds of passage, content to take someone else's nest for the time of their temporary halts. On the mantelpiece a Chinese figure, whose head ought to have nodded, but now declined to do so, lustres containing coloured grass, a cup and saucer on a plush mount, with gilt letters, "A Present from the Alexandra Palace," a Swiss clock; the whole cosmopolitan scheme rounded off at either end by a Japanese fan. Near the hearthrug (going bald in places), two hassocks, with evidence of suffering at the foot of previous tenants in times of mental distress. A lazy sideboard leaning against the wall bore circular beadmats and a wonderful display of fruit, which had lost

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something of the bloom that it doubtless possessed in the sixties. Two steel engravings up on either side, out of the perpendicular, owing to the shaking given by express trains of the North Western Railway, and representing, first, The Young Mountaineer, a bright lad in Highland costume, on an enormous black horse, trotting over a considerable portion of Scotland in the company of a white dog; and, second, The First Leap, same bright lad being taken by same enormous black horse over yawning chasms, to the astonishment of a deer, or fawn, or stag, or chamois, or cat. No other specimens of art, but a few spaces on the wall gave view of the paper as it was in the spring of its existence, and communicated the fact that certain pictures had been taken down to eke out the decoration of other rooms. A suite of chairs in green rep, those with unreliable backs being placed against the wall to disguise their crippled condition. In the bookcase, *Good Words* for 1870 and 1871, two volumes by Mrs. Henry Wood, *The Child's Companion*, and a pile of music bearing various names and various dates. An open pianoforte, with brown keys that should have been white, and three of them sunken helplessly.

"Expect you're glad to see me," cried Mrs. Furley, as she entered the room. "Take my boots off, like a dear. Been wondering coming down Park Village whether I should have to set to and do it myself."

"I'm off to Canada next week," said Winnie, ignoring the request. "Going out there with my father."

"I should simply hate to go," ringing the bell. "Snow all the year round, I'm told."

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"They told you wrong," retorted Winnie. "What are you ringing for? I don't want tea."

"Just for her to put some coals on."

Winnie elbowed Mrs. Furley out of the way and called to the landlady that it did not matter. Took the shovel and performed the simple task, dusting her hands afterwards, and giving to Mrs. Furley a reproving look.

"I never professed to be domesticated," explained, in refined tones, the newly married lady. "You're used to it. Comes natural to you. I should never learn if I lived to be a thousand. I told Mr. Furley so only on Monday morning, and he said he prefers me as I am."

"Love's young dream," laughed Winnie tolerantly. "Wait till he wants you to boil an egg. Wait till you get a house of your own. Wait till you begin to find children growing up all around you." The other lady gave a scream. "Well, I needn't worry about your affairs. Let's talk about mine."

Mrs. Furley, forced to take an interest in this subject, presently threw away languor, and became Miss Ladbrook of the shop in Fortess Road, but more amiable. She felt sorry Winnie was going, especially regretful because of a scheme in her mind, an idea of engaging Winnie as her first maid on starting house, and thus doing an uncommonly good turn to Winnie, and at the same time giving herself a fair chance of beginning well. That hope gone, she could but look forward to troublous times, stormy days, contentious hours, and Winnie gave, out of the mine of information which was hers, a few valuable

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diamonds for use when the hours referred to should arrive; Mrs. Furley stored them carefully, and promised not to lose sight of them. Reciprocity induced her to look around for a parting gift, and in the bedroom adjoining she very graciously permitted Winnie to try on the large hat worn in going away to Eastbourne; Winnie's opinion of herself thus apparelled sounded flattering. Mrs. Furley wanted to present a blouse, which Winnie privately thought not good enough, or a belt, which she privately thought much too good; the choice left to her, she decided in favour of a piece of wedding-cake, and this she proposed should remain under the pillow of her berth on the way out for the encouragement of interesting dreams.

"Well," said the married lady, when Winnie announced definitely that she must be going, "I'm sure I hope you'll be very happy. You've got the good wishes of all your friends."

"Look here," interrupted Winnie, "I know I shall have a good old-fashioned cry soon as the boat starts, and it isn't worth while beginning it before that time. You'd better by half talk as you used to in the old days."

"The old days," said Mrs. Furley sentimentally. "How far off they seem, to be sure! How happy I was then without knowing it. The dear, dead years of long ago. I believe I could make up poetry about them if I had time. You can let yourself out of the front door; it'll save me a few steps."

In the hall Miss Meers, the landlady, had been snatching another holiday by chatting with a man

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who wanted to leave combs on approbation, and dismissed him sharply, in order to speak a few more words to the visitor. If the visitor, by chance, heard of a willing girl, not wanting in courage when faced with hard work, moderate in regard to breakages, and sparing in back-answers, would the visitor send her on to the Crescent, where fourteen pounds a year awaited her? Miss Meers hoped she was successful in making herself perfectly clear. She did not want one who would forget to make the beds on the third floor, and excuse herself afterwards by saying: "Oh, I quite thought I had; must have overlooked them, I s'pose!" or who, being sent round to Hawse's in the High Street on some simple errand, such as purchase of half a pound of castored sugar, returned three-quarters of an hour later with cock-and-bull stories of the shop being crowded, or of dropping her change and having to wait to find the scattered coppers.

"I know all their games," asserted Miss Meers. "They can't play about with me. I don't mind telling you" voice lowered confidentially "that I was a domestic servant myself once. In a good family, mind you. You ought to have seen the fuss when I left."

"I can imagine it," said Winnie. "Good luck to you. Hope you'll find the right one."

"Don't be ill going across," begged Miss Meers as a last favour.

Adieux to be said also to certain tradesmen up in Kentish Town Road, who brought wives down to emphasise amiable wishes; farewells to be given to

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Fraulein at the gymnasium, who recommended her to keep in practice; above all, a general good-bye to London. Here it was that Mrs. Enefer became useful, and Arthur Lord proved himself indispensable. The two worked in turns. Morning traffic over, and the western part of Kentish Town provided with greens and fruit, and the midday meal cleared away, Mrs. Enefer said, with relish, "Now then, what's the programme for the day?" Many of the sights of London were known to Winnie by name only; her habit had been when they occurred in conversation to remark that she really ought to go there, but with the prospect of a long life in town before her there had appeared no necessity for fixing the date. Now all this became an urgent matter; as Mrs. Enefer argued (her daughter, son, and brother-in-law following on the same side), Winnie would present an appearance of stupidity if, on some occasion, a friendly Colonial should come up to her and say, "Pardon me, but what is the Tower of London like?" and she, turning, replied, "To tell you the truth, I've never actually been there." So, not only the Tower, but other notable places in London had to be visited, and no time wasted either, for a cable was likely to come at any moment giving the title of the steamer and the name of the line. Mrs. Enefer's hours were from two till six, when Arthur Lord relieved her, giving, on his side, about four hours of determined attention as guide; Arthur compiled in spare moments at Euston a time-table, which allowed a quarter of an hour at the end for conversation on matters not relating to the evening task. Thus Winnie went

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about town, slightly impeded at first by the possession of a shilling book intended for the use of visitors to London, but bearing a remote date, and referring with enthusiasm to the new viaduct which crossed the Holborn Valley, to the Colosseum on the east side of Regent's Park, to the Soho Bazaar. Eventually the volume was left at home, the time-table discarded, and, left free, Winnie and one of her two companions saw the mounted soldiers outside the Horse Guards, looked at the statues near Westminster Abbey, and Winnie said—

"Good-bye, Sir Robert Peel; good-bye, Lord Palmerston; good-bye, Earl of Derby; good-bye, George Canning, whoever you are; good-bye, Lord Beaconsfield; I've heard about you and your primroses."

And nodded to the Houses of Parliament.

Arthur Lord discovered a free day for the National Gallery, where Mrs. Enefer made the day more entirely free by borrowing a catalogue from some Americans. Winnie introduced herself on returning the catalogue, and the Americans were delighted to hear the news; Canada, they said, was not the United States, but could be regarded as a bright place all the same, and they gave several instances of folk who had succeeded there; Winnie, in leaving them, felt that her fortune was, to all intents and purposes, made and completed. In Room IV. the two agreed Winnie could now say she had done the National Gallery, and they skipped the intervening rooms and went on to Number XXII., deciding there that they thought little or nothing of Mr. Turner as an artist, but saying so in a whisper lest it should not

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be the popular view. Mrs. Enefer's candid opinion was that her own early colour-work in schooldays, even before it had been touched up by the governess, had something of fidelity to nature that Turner failed to catch. So out into Trafalgar Square, to say farewell to the lions and to Nelson and to the glistening spray of the fountains, and search for what Mrs. Enefer called an Aerated bread shop, since all this critical work made tea a necessary restorative. Next to picture galleries they found museums the most exhausting, and when they had gone through the British on one day and the South Kensington on a second, each endeavoured to cheer the other by the reminder that there would never be any necessity to see these places again. The girl went up the Monument and surveyed London as from the eye of a bird; Mrs. Enefer excusing herself on the grounds that she could see all she desired from Fish Street Hill. The churches Winnie liked best of all. The Abbey, with its crowd of stone people, the open and spacious St. Paul's, and some of the City churches were places where she could rest for a few minutes, think of the good fortune that had come to her, and silently endeavour to express thankfulness. Over certain of the London sights she became enthusiastic, and in Kensington Gardens Arthur Lord went so far in his desire for perfect agreement as to admit that, all things considered, the Albert Memorial might be worse.

Top and crown of all came on an evening when Arthur had raced in his dinner hour to Bermondsey, where, snatching a moment with Winnie's



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father, he ascertained that the old man was looking forward with impatience to the journey, and hoping it would not be delayed too long; the old man wanted to see Winnie in order to ascertain where the money was coming from, but Winnie acutely denied the necessity for this interview until the expected message by cable arrived. When the steamer left with them from Liverpool, perhaps when they started from Queenstown, she would feel safe. Arthur Lord brought with the Bermondsey news orders for the theatre, presented originally to a chief clerk in the Superintendent's Office, and come down to him by a series of fortunate accidents. Orders for the dress circle. Evening dress indispensable. The greengrocer's in Castle Road formed itself at once into a council to decide how the situation could be met, and nothing, in the opinion of intimates, being too good for Winnie as the day of departure came near, Miss Enefer lent a white silk blouse, whilst the brother charged himself with the task of providing a spray of flowers that would distract attention from anything short or anything excessive in the costume. Arthur Lord arranged to wear his Sunday suit, to buy a white dress tie, and to keep on his overcoat. This settled, Miss Enefer asked what piece they were going to see, and Arthur confessed he had not had the moment or the opportunity to ascertain; Winnie said it was bound to be something good.

If anything could increase her pleasing conceit of herself, it was found in the circumstance that their arrival on the top of the yellow omnibus excited audible comment on the part of certain of the other

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passengers. Why didn't people who could afford to be in evening dress ride in their own carriages? What business had they to travel about on 'buses that were intended for those who worked for a living? Cheeseparing, that's what it was; cheeseparing, and nothing else. All the upper classes thought about was outside show; starving their poor insides very likely, just for the sake of keeping up appearances. Arthur Lord desired to turn upon the critics, but Winnie would not permit her enjoyment to be marred, and conversing with him in undertones, took care to miss none of the comments.

"Do you know what I shall think about when I want to remember London?"

"Me!"

"Guess again."

"Half-way up Highgate Hill where we first met."

"You've got one more."

He took time to consider. "Give it up!"

"I shall think," half closing her eyes, "I shall think of the crowd opposite the Horse Shoe, waiting to go into the gallery of the Oxford. Once I get that picture clear and distinct, with the posters outside, and the policemen keeping order, everything else will come."

When the two, stepping down from the yellow omnibus and receiving from the other passengers a final screech of "Mind you take a cab home!" approached the theatre, Arthur Lord blamed himself severely on discovering that the play bore a French title, that every name on the outside bills suggested foreign extraction, that most of the folk going up

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the steps were chattering in a language with which he had at times professed to be well acquainted. Winnie declared it did not matter in the least; the satisfaction of sitting in the dress circle would still be theirs, to be relished with no other circumstance to interfere with full enjoyment; Arthur could tell her about the play as it went along.

"I may miss a word here and there."

"You'll get the general hang of it," remarked Winnie encouragingly.

Between the acts he admitted that certain of the folk on the stage talked rather too quickly for him, whilst some mumbled their sentences; apart from the fact that the principal lady found herself in trouble of a kind, he was unable to gain any reliable idea of the course of events. But Winnie felt proud of him when at intervals he, listening with an expression that suggested mental agony, succeeded in catching the word "Oui," and informed her that this, freely translated, meant "Yes," that "Merci" might be taken as the equivalent of "Thanks"; he was also in a position to give her the meaning of the words "Mon Dieu," of which Act Three mainly consisted.

"Oh, well," she said, clapping hands heartily as the curtain finally descended, and looking for Miss Enefer's cloak under the seat, "it'll give me something to talk about."

Even the rain, now peltering down, could not damp her spirits on this great evening, and when Arthur put a question to one or two independent cabmen, and she heard the answer, she would not allow the wild expenditure, preferring to walk all the way rather

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than become party to such a bargain. Omnibuses going north appeared full within, but outside seats were empty, and she insisted they should return home in the manner of the out journey; on Arthur Lord protesting, she took up skirts and made a dash across the roadway. Under the tarpaulin, worn as a cowl and partially sheltering them, Arthur found compensation by placing his arm around her waist.

"Want you to tell me something. Not getting much of the rain, are you?"

"Nothing to speak of."

"Will you go so far as to promise this?" begged her companion under the tarpaulin. "You'll get out there, and if your looks improve, as I'm afraid they will, you'll be certain to get some—well, accidental offers, as it were." She laughed. "When they come, will you write and let me know before you give anything like an affirmative answer?"

"Before I say 'Yes' you mean? Of course, I agree to that. I can go farther if you like, and say——"

She whispered. He kissed her.

"And thank you," she went on, "whilst I'm on the subject, for all your kindness. I'm not one to say much, but I think a lot. I'm not like Kate. My half-sister, Kate, now, she's got the gift of saying all she means and a bit more."

"Your father seems fond of her."

"Likes her better than he likes me. And I will say this for Kate: she's never come a cropper as her brothers have."

"What about your own brother? Aren't you going to see him before you sail?"

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"I want the date kept quiet," explained Winnie, "lest any of the Bermondsey lot should interfere with father, and I shall go down to Shorncliffe just the day before. It'll upset me saying good-bye to Bert more than anything else, and I want to put it off till the last moment. I say! Just you touch my hair. Isn't it sopping wet!"

Mrs. Enefer ordered her instantly to bed, and declined all responsibility unless commands were obeyed, but Winnie had much to discuss consequent on receipt of a satisfactory cable from Quebec. Moreover, after remarking on the amount of trouble found on the stage as compared with the amount found in real life, the sofa had to be pulled to the centre of the room that she might give an exact imitation of the French lady in the last act, with the final tumble-down upon the carpet.

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## CHAPTER XII

"I know my West, I know my East,
Acquaintance with the rest I boast
(I've been with Lunn and Cook):
My travels constitute a feast
Of mem'ry; yet I relish most
The trips I never took!"

MRS. ENEFER, with the responsibilities of a trainer, declared that when she saw Winnie off for Liverpool, and, perhaps, went with her to that port (do a thing properly, was the lady's motto, or don't do it at all), she intended to have the satisfaction of feeling the young traveller started in perfect condition of health. So "Indoors for a day or two, if you please!" and Winnie obeyed, with the knowledge that Mrs. Enefer, in foregoing the task of picking up some loose ends of shopping and sightseeing, and, in particular, cancelling the fair and attractive intention of making a pilgrimage through back streets of Aldgate and the neighbourhood favoured a year or two previously by an industrious criminal, was sharing the mortification that sentence of imprisonment entailed. Winnie took doses of something procured from the herbalist, sat at the window protected by a screen, papered with coloured portraits of Society's most favoured lady members, and read alternately the



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elderly guide-book to London and some pamphlets written with a buoyant pen concerning Canada, collected by the uncle from the inquiry office in his hotel. More than once recently Winnie had had to stop herself, arrest her thoughts, and say definitely and decidedly—

"This isn't a dream, mind you!"

Now, she found it easier to pretend it was all a piece of agreeable imagination, interrupted only by occasional naps, wherein frightful disasters occurred, with steamer going down, steamer blown up, steamer making its way across on its side and forcing passengers to hug the funnels for dear life, steamer turning completely over; these experiences of her sleeping mind seemed much more real than the events of wakeful hours. Meanwhile, to be waited upon was an attention that had charms other than novelty. The old chef drove up in his trap many times a day, sometimes not alighting owing to the skittishness of a pony which started a dance of affected terror on the least provocation (the music of a piano-organ, or a stray envelope in the road, or the absence of these), and the uncle would call out—

"Well, how are we getting on this time? Anything you want fetched, be sure to let me know. Can't I drive her anywhere or something? Time's getting short; mustn't leave everything till the last."

And, receiving a consoling reply to the effect that preparations were taking their course at a commendable rate, allowed the pony to match itself once more with the wind. Mr. Chapman, putting away all traces of imperfect manners, appeared as a gentleman of the excellent behaviour that is generally, but not

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always, the result of a long and distinguished ancestry; to be entrusted with some small commissions for performance in the brief period due to lunch made him assume the air of a Queen's Messenger. Miss Enefer explained to Winnie that such was the power of control she now had over her fiancé, owing to the imminent approach of marriage, that the lifting of a little finger would send him, if a friend of Miss Enefer so desired, to the farthermost corners of the earth, and certainly he could be relied upon to procure anything in the neighbourhood of the Cobden statue. The date of the wedding rested with Miss Enefer, and Winnie occupied spare moments in selecting some against which nothing detrimental could be urged, and finally chose one, distant about four months, on which, according to the almanac, no event of importance had hitherto happened. The lad Robert craved that some task might be entrusted to him, and on Winnie asserting the only desire she had was to see the R. O. baby before she left (adding that this she knew to be impossible), the lad wrote to Aberystwyth, enclosing stamp for reply, and was able, on the return of the post, to bring to Castle Road a photograph taken apparently by an amateur in the early days of his art, but giving some idea of the boy, grown now so big and defiant as to suggest that, consequent on a more intimate acqaintance with politics, he had overcome his dread of the leader of the Liberal Party. Of all the willing assistants at this urgent period none excelled, none equalled Arthur Lord.

Winnie had looked forward to the task of conducting her father to the tailor's, and regretted the necessity of appointing Arthur as deputy; she impressed upon

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the young man the need for caution out of the ordinary. Not a word to be said concerning the date of sailing; it must be pretended that the arrangements were still, so to speak, in the air; the port had not yet been decided upon; Canada might possibly be given up for some other destination. Best plan would be to say as little as possible, and the conversation that did take place could be kept to such subjects as the state of trade in Bermondsey, the future of Princess Victoria Mary of Teck, a likely horse for the Derby. Arthur Lord returned in high feather at being able to report the complete success of his delicate mission. The old man had shown a very proper recognition of all that was being done, and Kate had sent a message which, so far as it could be understood, lacked nothing of gratitude. So long as Kate lived she would never forget Winnie's kindness; she had always loved her.

"Funny ways she had of showing it," laughed Winnie.

But love had now abdicated and given way to admiration. At some future time Kate hoped to be able to share the expenses now being incurred by Winnie.

"That's all talk!"

Little said about the rest of the family, but this might have been due to Arthur Lord's dexterity; he had taken it upon himself to hint that not one of them was to be present at the final good-bye.

"I don't feel afraid of them any longer," remarked Winnie. "And I suppose, strictly speaking, I ought to see them all just once before I go."

"Take my advice and don't."

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"Perhaps you're wise," she conceded. "You've got more sense than I used to give you credit for."

It appeared Winnie was required to present herself in person at the shipping offices, and Mrs. Enefer, whilst declaring the girl would be better off at home, agreed to escort her to Cockspur Street, first clothing her so plentifully that Winnie declared a hansom would be inadequate. At the shipping offices, a polite clerk asked if she were really Miss Winifred Garland, and on receiving the answer that she would feel sorry to be anyone else, assured her everything was in order; handed across the counter documents of which she begged Mrs. Enefer to take charge.

"I'm so excited I shall be sure to lose them."

Gave all the particulars required with a readiness which persuaded the girl that exceptional arrangements had been made for her convenience and safety. The polite clerk, mentioning that hers were the last two vacant berths (there had been a dozen people begging and praying for them on bended knees since they were booked, offering money and offering love), prophesied she would find the Atlantic like a mill-pond; said also that for the chasing and rout of a desperate cold there was nothing, so he had been informed, to compare with a sea-voyage. Blew it away. Blew it right away, in a manner of speaking. And on the other side, according to statements communicated from reliable sources, the method of heating the rooms of houses was so perfect that anyone anxious to catch a fresh cold would find herself effectually baulked and presently induced to relinquish the effort.

"Well," said the attentive clerk, coming out to open

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the swing doors, "pleasant trip. Wish I were coming with you."

Mrs. Enefer considered the last remark to savour of cheek and impudence, and on the way home in the cab said so, but Winnie declined to discover fault in anyone or in anything. At the narrow part of Hampstead Road she saw Miss Connor on knees in the window of a draper's, and the opportunity of saying one more good-bye seemed too admirable to be lost. Miss Connor proved astonished, incredulous, delighted, congratulatory, everything that a young emigrant could desire; gave a long message for her old colleague, and confided to Winnie the news that having at last committed to memory the whole of "Shamus O'Brien," she was now entertaining thought of going in for reciting as a profession; friends had encouraged her and, clubbing together, had presented her with a volume called *Erin's Nosegay*, which she thought would keep her busy during the summer. She mentioned an admirable remedy for Winnie's indisposition, one that had never met failure, and remembered just in time that it acted as a charm, not for a chill, but for indigestion.

Busy hours and crowded minutes, now that the date had been fixed. The very last shilling in the Post Office book not far off owing to disbursements for clothes, warm and light, and a trunk which looked as though it would, set down in the backwoods, serve as a comfortable dwelling for folk who were not too long. Hampered by the cold—

"You've got it all over you," said Mrs. Enefer severely. "That's what you've got."

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—She permitted Miss Enefer to assist in the task of packing; everything had to be turned out later, because a photograph had been placed amongst the first articles; there would be no luck for her unless this hung near to her berth on board the steamer. The two girls examined the portrait carefully, and Miss Enefer, by placing a hand over the upper part of the face, declared she could see Winnie there. Winnie felt glad to hear this, and, kissing the glass of the frame, expressed hope that she might succeed in becoming half as good a woman as her dear mother had been. The Book of Omens went in, not wanted on the voyage because the owner knew it by heart. She took special care now to observe all its teachings, as, for instance, when an old schoolfellow of Miss Enefer's, making purchases downstairs, asked permission to come up to be introduced, and Miss Enefer mentioned in time—and only just in time—that she was red of hair. Winnie, fanning herself relievedly after the young woman had been sent away, declared it constituted the very narrowest escape from certain misfortune that she had ever experienced. Another schoolfellow, less disastrously endowed, was allowed to see Winnie because of her reputation as an expert in tea-leaves. Peering over these, she said that Winnie was about to undertake a journey.

"There you are!" said Winnie.

There might be an illness in store for her.

"It isn't going to be so smooth as that young fellow said."

She would encounter a dark woman or fair, with whom there would be some trouble; speaking gene-

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rally, great events were impending, and a considerable change would take place.

"Well, well!" cried Winnie, awed and impressed.

This change might be for the better, said the lady prophet, still examining the tea-leaves with close attention; much would depend upon circumstances, and upon a man who would be found to be concerned. This man would exercise a notable effect on the events. The young seer, in conclusion, said that if only an aunt, to whom she was indebted for all she knew, were here, information of a more definite nature could be discovered and communicated.

"A splendid gift," declared Winnie. "If I possessed it, I should never want to be doing anything else."

Arthur Lord took charge of the purchases from the ready-made clothier's, and had them in his care at the Down Parcels Office. He also promised himself the task of fetching the governor from Bermondsey the evening before the day of sailing, giving him a chair bedstead for the night in his room, and keeping watch and ward over him until Winnie accepted the duty of supervision in the boat express at Euston Station. Winnie's first decision was that she would not see him until they met on the platform; the others agreed. Her second thought was that without giving him the date or place of departure, he ought in all kindness and fairness to be taken round London, that he might have a pleasant memory of it in after years; the others again gave approval. She feared there would be no opportunity now of running down to Shorncliffe, and it was to be hoped Bert would not misconstrue the omission; the others said that

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Army men possessed sense above the average. Accordingly the day before the great day had this for programme.

Ten a.m. Winnie well wrapped up leaves Castle Road, N.W., goes by omnibus and train to Honor Oak Cemetery. Desires to go alone.

Noon. Returns to Victoria, where Miss Enefer (who considers and perhaps rightly considers that she has been kept out of a good deal of the fun) meets her. Some final shopping in Oxford Street.

Four p.m. Tea.

Five p.m. Arthur Lord brings governor to Charing Cross Station, where they take first, an omnibus to Cricklewood; second, an omnibus from Cricklewood back to Marble Arch; third, from Marble Arch to Liverpool Street; fourth, Liverpool Street to Charing Cross; fifth and last, Charing Cross by Archway omnibus home. (Mr. Chapman had another itinerary, but Winnie said that too many Cook's guides spoilt the tour.)

Eight p.m. Supper and talk.

Ten p.m. Arthur Lord takes governor home to chair bedstead.

Unanimity of opinion amongst the committee on the morning that nothing had been overlooked, that no detail lacked due and sufficient consideration. Winnie, cheered by the sunshine—in itself an amiable portent—taxed them with experiencing a sensation of relief at the imminent termination of their duties; they declined to admit this. The various members asserted that there would be tearful and desolate hours for them once the express left Euston. Arthur

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Lord announced that he proposed to go to the very end of the platform, and, perhaps—justified by his official position—beyond, that he might claim to have had the very last glimpse.

"Don't you imagine, my girl, for a moment," said Mrs. Enefer, with imitation sternness, "that you're going to sleep here after to-night. I've got a very short way of dealing with people who outstay their welcome. If they can't take a broad hint they find themselves jolly well locked out. So I warn you!" Mrs. Enefer said this three times, and sent Moltke from the room because he did not give a smile of sufficient breadth.

Winnie seemed quiet and thoughtful and without words when Miss Enefer met her on the return from Honor Oak at Victoria; but for that young woman's tact, Winnie might have found herself accused of giving way to tears. Oxford Street and its windows restored the power of speech; tea at the corner of Charing Cross Road created a further improvement, and by the time they met her father and Arthur Lord under the clock at the station she felt she had no complaint other than her chill. Father, shaven, clean collar, and with all the appearances of an estimable person, hailed her as he turned the corner of the bookstall.

"Ain't going to tell you how much obliged I am," he cried. "We'll leave all that till after. I could do it in a letter, and I don't make much of a fist with my pen, either. Schooling wasn't so pop'lar in my young day as what it is now. Pleased to meet you, lady" (to Miss Enefer). "My girl here seems to have the knack of finding 'em. I'm sure this young chap who's

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been down to fetch me—he couldn't have done more if he'd been my own son-in-law. Ah" (chuckling at Arthur Lord's confusion) "that went 'ome, that did!"

"Don't talk so loud," said Winnie. "When we get on the 'bus the less you say and the more you look about you the better."

"Not ashamed of your poor old father, are you?"

"Have felt like it," she replied candidly, "in my time. But not now."

"There's only one question," with deference, as they went through the corridor of the station. "What day do we start, and where do we set sail from?"

She shook her head.

"But the others want to know."

"The others aren't going to know."

"Yes, but——"

"Keep quiet," she commanded, in the way of one controlling an inquisitive child. "Ask another question and you shan't go at all. Don't lag behind like that. Lift up your feet as you walk. Come along and enjoy yourself."

London was at its best, and Winnie did not speak to her companions as the omnibus went up the lower part of Regent Street. Here she found the stress and the bustle, the sounds and the scents of town; every-one well-to-do and with not too much to do, and in club windows men who had an almost wistful look of desiring occupation. At every yard, at every inch, on the pavement something of interest; an over-dressed



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woman perched on high heels, a brace of smart youths, a gorgeous baby in a white perambulator, a dispute between a cabman and his fare; in a side street a small crowd already gathering at the doors of a theatre; broughams at large shops and men in livery waiting with wraps over the arm; a rush at the Circus for public conveyances, with a "Full on top, I keep telling you!" from the harried conductors.

"You dear, big, splendid old town!" said Winnie, under her breath. "Seems a shame to leave you. There can't be another like you anywhere."

From a street off Edgware Road, a sight that never fails to make the heart of a Londoner jump and throb; Winnie sprang up, the other passengers followed suit, the driver instinctively checked the horses. A fine, big, noisy, foolish, roaring crowd, wildly excited about something that could not be perceived from the top of the omnibus, pressing and blundering and swaying across the road, and recruited at every moment by men and women and children hurrying up from Lisson Grove, scampering across from Star Street. High in the thick of it a constable's helmet; a harsh whistle sounded, and policemen giving up their leisurely gait put down heads and ran. Traffic was held up until the crowd, after a few moments of indecision, rushed into a street opposite, and with a final shriek of excitement, disappeared. The Cricklewood omnibus went on, every passenger contributing something to the general information, every passenger gratified at the rare and excellent fortune which had brought the scene on at the particular moment.

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"Good many years," said Winnie, fanning herself, "before we see anything like that again, father."

"Don't know about you," he remarked vaguely.

Father wanted refreshment at the Crown at Cricklewood, and Arthur Lord suggested lemonade; father said four ale was his drink; they compromised by calling for shandy-gaff. Father doubted whether he felt justified in thus playing tricks with his constitution, but a cigar assisted him in trying the experiment, and as he sat in the gardens with the others he admitted he felt fairly comfortable. He gave a stare of acute concern on being told by Miss Enefer that beer was as yet unknown in Canada; he appealed for truth, and seemed considerably relieved on hearing that, although taverns might not be found there in the luxurious abundance provided by Bermondsey, this was an invented statement. He offered Miss Enefer a short pungent address, intimating a strong belief in a future life where considerable warmth would be shown to those who, in this world, departed, even by the breadth of a hair, from the most perfect accuracy.

"A girl who tells a lie," he declared solemnly, "is capable of anything. If you was a daughter of mine I'd turn you out of 'ouse and 'ome, I would. I'd cut you off with a shilling." He crossed to Winnie and spoke in an undertone. "My dear, you might lend me a bob or two to go on with."

"Certainly not!"

"But I want to stand treat, don't I, when it comes to my turn?"

"It isn't coming to your turn. You've had all you're going to have."

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"One drink," he protested in a dazed way, "one drink in one evening. Why, I never heard of such a thing in the whole course of my existence!"

"Lot of other novelties in store for you, father."

On the way from Marble Arch to the City he admitted he had had no idea the north side of the river could offer anything so presentable. Winnie, nudging Miss Enefer, pointed out Frascati's as the town house of Lord Salisbury, Meux's brewery as the Home for Lost Dogs, and the Prudential Offices as Buckingham Palace. Miss Enefer seconded this effort at entertainment, and he accepted their statements without sign of incredulity, but when Arthur Lord referred to the statue at the beginning of Cheapside as a representation in stone of a favourite uncle, the old man turned upon him and advised him strenuously to avoid the blunder of being too clever. "Don't you imagine you can play about with me, my lad," he went on. "Otherwise you'll find that two can play at that game. I bested you once before, and if you ain't jolly careful I'll make you look silly again. It wouldn't be a very considerable task. Well, then," to the ample apologies, "take warning from experience. I may be a juggins, but I don't like being reminded of the fact." The youth endeavoured to atone for his indiscretion by providing, opposite Broad Street Station, refreshment, whilst the two young women waited outside, but this did not entirely console, and on the journey back to Charing Cross Winnie's father remained surly with an occasional growl. "They can't do what they like with old Jimmie

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Garland. Jimmie wasn't born yesterday. They have to get up pretty middling early in the morning to get the best of the old man. He may not be so young as some of 'em, but he's about twice as artful as most; don't you forget it! Taking a liberty; that's what you're doing!" and other remarks of a self-applauding nature. At Ludgate Circus he drew Winnie's attention to a crowded bar where two ladies were serving busily, and mentioned that he believed this to be the place where the best ale in London was to be obtained.

"How's Kate?" she asked, to divert the conversation. "Is she much upset about all this business?"

"Takes it more to heart than there's any necessity for. As I tell her, it's the best thing that could have possibly 'appened, in view of all the circumstances."

"She's your favourite, father."

"Kate's a good girl," he said impartially; "what I mean is, a good girl to me. She's always 'elped me when I wanted 'elp. Not like some."

Winnie retorted warmly.

"Driblets," he remarked, snapping his finger and thumb. "That's what I call the trifling amounts you've sent me from time to time. Driblets. Besides which, Kate's been straightforward from start to finish, whereas your post-office orders never gave what I call a reliable clue as to where you lived. I don't say Kate hasn't made mistakes; we're all of us human. But she's never hid her address from us."

"I did that because I had to."

"Had to!" he echoed derisively.

"Yes, had to!" She changed her tone and took his elbow affectionately. "Look here, father, we're

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not going to quarrel now. We're going to start afresh, and we're going to keep on good terms with each other. Everything in the past is rubbed out. This is where old Temple Bar used to be, just here, and those are the Law Courts. The Old Bailey's farther back. We passed near it a few minutes ago."

He looked menacingly over his shoulder. "They reckon they're up to every trick," he remarked confidentially, "but some of us have got something up our sleeve that they don't know nothing about. Eh, my girl? We can find a way of besting 'em once we put our heads together."

"Daresay!"

"Only," lowering his voice, "there's no time to be lost. Every day means additional risk, so to speak. You're bearing that in mind, I trust."

"You won't be much longer now before you're on the way."

"I s'pose it wouldn't be possible by any manner of means to get away to-morrow, would it?"

Leaning forward, she repeated her father's question to Miss Enefer and to Arthur Lord; the young man, fearful of again risking a reputation for high diplomacy, shook his head, but Miss Enefer replied that it was easier to talk than to do, and the old man agreed. He was not thinking so much about himself, he mentioned; for his part he did not feel very keen about going, especially after this trip. Seemed to him there were many worse places than London if one but took the trouble to get about and have a thoroughly good look at it from end to end.

"You leave it all to her," advised Miss Enefer, with

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a jerk towards Winnie. "She's got her head screwed on the proper way."

"I only want the right thing done," he pleaded.

"Then don't you interfere. Ask too many questions, and you'll spoil everything. Here's where we get down. Take him in charge, Mr. Lord."

A phrase which, chosen without due consideration, throws Winnie's parent into something like fury. Outside the money-changers' at Charing Cross he declares a vehement antipathy to a hand being placed on his shoulder; declines to allow anyone, old or young, male or female, tall or short, to act in this manner unless they are clothed in the appropriate uniform. Folk gather near in order to ascertain the cause of dissension, and Arthur Lord conducts the party up Adelaide Street to the turning of no name with, on one side, the railings of a churchyard. There, only a pavement artist takes interest in the proceedings, giving up temporarily his supervision of The Sailor Boy's Return and The Battle of Abu Klea and other works of art. Winnie and Miss Enefer run into the Lowther Arcade to buy a toy to be sent on to the Masters's baby. They return to find increased commotion.

"Then tell him to keep away from me," argues Winnie's father truculently, "that's all I ask. I won't have him interferin'."

"He's my friend," says Winnie.

"You've got too many friends."

"I want them all just now," she retorts. "I'm going to leave them for a long, long time, and I mean to take away pleasant memories of them."

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"Where are *you* going, may I ask?"

"You ought to have kept to shandy-gaff," she remarks soothingly. "You've had too much to drink."

"I'm sorry," with ominous courtesy, "sorry for more reasons than one to call you a story-teller."

"Where do you think I'm going, then?"

"I don't know, and I'm not sure that I care. All I'm certain about is that me and Kate——"

"No, no. You and me. Not you and Kate."

"Your 'alf-sister Kate," he says laboriously and with deliberation, "has got herself into a bit of a corner, and she's out on bail at the present moment. You sent this somewhat interfering young fellow to propose that we—Kate and me—should pop off abroad together. My idea was for her to say that she spent the evening in question with you up at Torriano Avenue at the address where my boys made a call and for you to back her up."

"I don't tell lies any longer. And just try to understand this, father. It's you and I who are going to set sail to-morrow. You and I. If Kate is in trouble she must get out of it. We're going to leave them, and all their worries, behind us. You and I are going to start afresh and I'm going to look after you."

"Shan't go without Kate," doggedly. "That's my first word and it's my last. Shan't go with you, and shan't go without Kate." An emphatic oath to clinch the statement.

The pavement artist cries "Hold up!" Miss Enefer and Arthur Lord catch her as she is falling to the ground.

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## CHAPTER XIII

"Society rests on the forbearance of the general servant."

THE Crescent, with which Winnie already possessed a nodding acquaintance, looked out on the exact half of a circle, railed in and covered with a carpet of grass recently freshened by showers of rain; sturdy trees made an effort to keep out the gaze of those who paid nothing to the up-keep and the attention required to keep this rural spot in order, and possessed, therefore, no key of its gates. The main road, with pavement and tram-rails, divided it from a friend opposite that called itself a Square, and had taken, to prevent confusion, the shape of a triangle. At the back of the Crescent ran in a deep cutting the North Western Railway, fresh from Euston, to some a disturbance, to others a lullaby; new arrivals said that by rights trains ought not to be allowed between the hours of eleven p.m. and seven in the morning, and threatened to write to the directors; residents declared that one soon became accustomed to the sound of trains, and pointed out the great convenience of being able to tell the hours of night without striking a match. The Crescent prided itself on the fact that at least three of its houses were occupied each by one family, and warned visitors not to go away with the idea that it was entirely made up of dwellings



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where the Apartments card appeared intermittently in the windows; the time was not so very long past, existed, indeed, within the memory of living man and living woman, when the Crescent could be counted as almost fashionable, with residents who had a carriage and pair from the livery stables three times a week for the purpose of taking the air around the Outer Circle of Regent's Park, and if you had come at that period and knocked at the door, saying,

"Can you let me have a couple of furnished rooms for about a month?"

Why, the page boy in buttons would have hurled you down the steps and sent you sprawling into the roadway. In more recent years artists had lived there —you must have heard of Mr. Brigley, who used to paint in oils; a great man in his day before he took to drink—and authors, too; useless to pretend you were not acquainted with the work of Mr. C. R. Oldenshaw, who wrote *Was She Justified?* a novel counted somewhat risky at the time of its publication, and only read under the veil of a brown paper cover; but, compared with some produced by writers since, a volume for Sunday afternoon reading. Being a Crescent with a reputation, there were householders determined the reputation should not go down; Miss Meers, in particular, urged that every care should be taken to keep it refined, select, dignified, and worthy of the niece in a boarding-school at Folkestone.

Miss Meers, her hair in curlers, but so severely apparelled that she could have answered the front bell at any moment, opened the kitchen door and put her head in. Winnie kneeling at the front of the grate, a

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black-lead brush in her gloved hands, did not look up.

"I won't have it! I will not have it! I never heard such a thing in my life before. It's outrageous."

Winnie gave the last touch to the bars, and rising, placed the brushes neatly in a wooden box. She looked pale and rather thinner, but there were still the signs of determined cheerfulness.

"What in the world can she be thinking about? Stop it at once, miss!" A stamp of a red-slippered foot emphasised the command.

"You often taken like this early in the morning?" asked Winnie curiously. "I haven't been here long, and I'm not used to you yet. But if it's only now and then that it happens, I can give you the address of a chemist up in Junction Road who knows more than all the doctors of the neighbourhood put together."

Miss Meers seemed deprived of powers of speech. Winnie took the kettle and went into the scullery to fill it from the tap.

"Doesn't seem the least use me speaking to her," said Miss Meers, again addressing in despairing tones a non-existent companion. "She can't possibly know when she's doing of it. Come here!" she ordered. "I want to know what you mean by whistling at your work."

"Why shouldn't I, ma'am?"

"'Why shouldn't I, ma'am,'" mimicked the lady. "I'll very soon tell you why you shouldn't. You shouldn't because it gives a house a bad name. You shouldn't because it's never done in the best families. Why, when I——" She stopped.

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"Right you are, ma'am," called out the girl in the scullery. "I don't want to have rows. I've had enough of rows to last me a lifetime. I can't work so well, when I don't whistle, but if you object to it——"

"I do object to it. I order you not to do it again."

"Enough said," agreed Winnie. "By the bye, could you let me have a little money on account?"

"I could," replied the other promptly, "but I shan't. You came here on the seventeenth and when the seventeenth comes round again you'll get what's due. What do you want it for?"

"To send to father."

Miss Meers remarked ironically that here was a likely tale; hinted that the date of her birth was not yesterday, and made the suggestion that such a story should be reserved for the Marines. Winnie, indignant, produced from the mantelpiece an addressed envelope, and said that if Miss Meers went out during the day to any neighbourhood not her own she could buy a post-office order for five shillings, enclose it in the envelope, and slip it in a pillar-box. Miss Meers, to foil an ingenious effort at deceit, at once closed with this offer.

"That'll please him," said Winnie, checking a sigh.

Characteristic of her that she should determinedly oust the past events from her memory. Up in Castle Road everything in business affairs and in private matters was dated by the Enefers from her illness, and if question arose in regard to dates it found itself always settled by—"I can tell you exactly when it happened.

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It was the evening when the doctor said he very much doubted whether Winnie would pull through, and that, of course, was the twenty-ninth." Or, "Wait a bit, and I'll give it you. It was the morning when Winnie took her first solid nourishment, and don't tell me I'm wrong, because I know better."

The Enefers soon discovered that she found no pleasures of retrospection in discussing details of the time, and this gave astonishment. Mrs. Enefer had once spent a fortnight in Bartholomew's Hospital, and derived considerable interest and a never-failing topic of conversation from the circumstance. Miss Enefer in her schooldays had managed to catch scarlatina, and could talk for twenty minutes by the clock on the subject without varying a word from descriptions previously given. One of the few historical incidents which persuaded Moltke to dare show volubility was a reference to a remote process of vaccination which he had undergone; with difficulty the family prevented him, during the recital, from taking off his coat and rolling up his left shirt sleeve. Arthur Lord in his time had suffered from boils at the back of his neck, and liked to speak of them in proper chronological order. Chapman once sprained his ankle at football, and did not permit the incident to fade from anybody's recollection. But Winnie, on the rare occasion of her visits to Castle Road—Miss Meers had a theory that the more liberty a girl had the more she demanded, and indoors was the best place for any whilst they remained single—Winnie made it understood that the present engaged her attention, the future stimulated her interest, but to the past no

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reference need be made. Especially in regard to the future she talked, and Mrs. Enefer, whilst protesting against hurry, agreed that a large house in the West End was a worthy aim, and one to be kept in mind. At the same time, Mrs. Enefer spoke frankly. Never a woman to cloud opinions or to surround them with a mist of words, she declared that Torriano Avenue had done no good, and that the period ensuing after departure from Mrs. Shorley's had encouraged a certain slackness; the Crescent was to be looked upon as a corrective.

"And I wish I could see you looking stronger, my dear, so that I could be sure you could bear it."

"I shall manage," said Winnie, with confidence. "I never yet allowed hard work to beat me."

All the same, hard work did its best and its worst, day in and day out, and Winnie admitted to herself that on going to rest at eleven o'clock at night, no rocking was required. "Time" being called by the alarum at seven o'clock in the morning, work was ready for her, and the tussle began at once; if Winnie discovered herself able to change her dress by four o'clock in the afternoon, she reckoned she had won the first round; if she had no time to look at the evening paper left on the hat-stand by one of the gentlemen of the second-floor back, she knew the succeeding round had not been so triumphant. Miss Meers, acting as second for Winnie's opponent, in the intervals of performing her share of the house duties, looked on with a wary and observant eye, pointing out with persistency any shirking exhibited by Winnie, every failure on the girl's part to keep the contest going.

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When Miss Meers, having arranged with one of the lodgers to stay in, went to give a look at the shops or seek other demure diversions, she recited, before going, plainly and distinctly, a list of tasks to be performed, premising that she knew as well as any and better than most that the moment a mistress turned her back a servant at once took up some frivolous literature and began to read. Upon her return Miss Meers went through the list and checked the performance, unable to conceal disappointment if she did not find that at least one item had been omitted.

"You're too clever," she remarked. "I'm certain you're getting the best of me if I only knew where. I can only suppose," with regret, "I'm getting old and stupid."

The advantage possessed by the Crescent over Torriano Avenue consisted in the fact that every floor had its separate interest, and, if one may say so, its individual story. First, Mrs. Furley. Winnie heard sometimes from the girl next door of delectable houses where only gentlemen were taken as lodgers or boarders; gentlemen who left the house at half-past eight in the morning to sprint to Gower Street and take the Underground Railway, gentlemen of whom nothing more was seen until half-past six or seven o'clock at night, sometimes later. Mrs. Furley, born Ladbrook, and representing another sex, seemed determined to find compensation for the years she had given to the counter, and when her husband returned on Saturdays, distressed with carrying a heavy, square-cornered bag from St. Pancras, she at

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once invested him with a new load in the shape of dreary complaints concerning the tiresome hours of the week, and on Mr. Furley, goaded into retort, crying,

"Why in the world don't you find something to do?"

Then the lady gave a short, bitter laugh which, translated, meant she was not likely to accept that advice; she might be a fool, but there were limits to her foolishness. Mrs. Furley occupied most of her time in ringing for Winnie, and sometimes she could think of no better excuse for this pastime than the announcement that she intended to go out and look for a house, and a house in London suitable for a young married couple might have been the rarest of diamonds to judge by Mrs. Furley's elaborate preparations for the search, the importance of her setting out, her definite march towards the statue, and her limp, dispirited, and generally tearful return. On occasions when she did find a small house Highgate way, against which no defect could be charged, she told Winnie that what she could not face, and would not face, was the awful responsibility. Some, she knew, were able to accept it with a light heart, but the mere prospect of having a whole house on her hands made her brain totter and encouraged reason to lose its sway. Treating Winnie variously as a close friend and as a lowly dependent, she said (at times) if Winnie would but promise to come with her more as a companion than as a servant she would take a house and furnish it without a moment's delay; said (at other times) that if Winnie did not learn to recognise

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her place at the Crescent, and to keep it, she would instantly formulate a complaint to the landlady, and make it her business to see that a new girl was obtained from the registry office. Winnie treated this with easy good-humour, knowing that severe punishment could always be meted out by refusing to accord to the lady five minutes of listening, and by creeping past her doorway quietly and unobserved, to go to or to come from Miss Estella Harburtone on the second-floor front.

Miss Harburtone with her sister, Miss Lane—who had retained the family title because in her task as a silver-cleaner in Oxford Street a singular or attractive surname was not indispensable—furnished their one room, and it was understood that Miss Meers provided no attendance; but Winnie could always make time to carry up cans of water and coals, and to button the younger sister at the back, fully repaid for these services by being permitted now and then to make an audience for the younger sister, now and then to look through the book labelled "Press Notices." Miss Harburtone rehearsed parts from early morning, occasionally going out to an afternoon performance to see if she could get in on her face (in other words, to offer her card at the box-office, and ask for a seat), and sometimes she was successful, and returning told all about the performance, acting the different parts so faithfully as to make Winnie cry, laugh, take a doleful expression, a horrified look, signs of pained anxiety, and always unconsciously twisting her features in imitation. Three times a week she went down to the agent's office and Winnie called out, "Good luck,



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miss!" from the area, but so far this message had not had the desired effect. Miss Harburtone spoke hopefully about fixing up something for the autumn; the attractive thing (and the unattractive thing) about the profession was that one never knew what might happen.

In the second-floor back were two gentlemen who, taking upon themselves the provision of breakfast in the morning, reached in that regard a high standard of excellence as boarders, but required dinner at night in the ground-floor front, and their hours of returning were so much the sport of circumstance that Winnie's stereotyped remark to them of an evening was an ironical "You have arrived, then? thought perhaps you'd lost yourselves. Couple of beauties, upon my word!" reproach that caused gratification as hinting at triumph in their endeavours to play the part of sober blades. Clerks in Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, they audited Miss Meers' little black book with a carefulness that drove that lady into the use of severe language which she hurled at Winnie, speaking later in wistful tones of a Mr. Bowles, who had good claim to the title of gentleman in that he always paid the sum at the foot of the page, never dreaming of committing the plebeian blunder of ascertaining how the amount came to be made up. All the same, Miss Meers was an honest woman and an admirable landlady, with a determination not to allow anyone, by getting the advantage over her, to imperil the prospects of the niece at a boarding-school at Folkestone. The top floor took an old lady who, when asthma did not trouble, gave proud information

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that she belonged to the has-beens, and talked of life in Gordon Square in the sixties, long before the chains and posts were taken away, and when chances were afforded to one of putting by a trifle. The distance of the view made it enchanting to her, and she told Winnie this position of housekeeper should be the goal of every girl engaged in domestic work.

Arthur Lord, faithful and reliable follower through all the gyrations, frequently waited at the Albert Street corner, thankful to get a few hurried words from her as she flew on some evening errand at a shop on which she had been sent with the stern warning—

"It now wants six minutes to nine; if you ain't back on the stroke of nine, I shall know you've been gossiping and idling!"

And young Lord, careful not to speak too much lest he should deprive himself of the joy of hearing her voice, had to listen to complaints of the tyranny of Miss Meers, and give ejaculations of sympathy; to listen also to wild projects of giving it all up and going on the stage; projects to which, in his anxiety not to give offence, he replied that there seemed to be a good deal in the idea, and that he saw no reason why it should not be carried out forthwith. This Winnie found highly discouraging, for what she keenly desired was opposition, definite, dogged, determined opposition, appeals to refrain from doing anything hastily, and deriding words. All the same, in the harrying and bullying and badgering which came from Miss Meers, who received every

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statement, important or unimportant, with flat denial, so that one was tempted to think it a sheer waste to tell the truth; who prided herself on being acquainted with every trick of the trade, and doubted whether the girl had yet been born who could get the better of her in any contest of artfulness—all the same, this vague dream, that meant nothing and would come to nothing, gave to her an enormous amount of satisfaction, and, deprived of the privilege of whistling, she performed in an undertone momentous and thrilling melodramas adapted from accounts given by Miss Harburtone, cleaning the front steps with,

"Oh, forgive me, Gerald; I was weak, perhaps foolish; but, indeed and indeed, I never betrayed you. Here on my knees I implore you to take me back, to forget the horrid past, to forget everything except the brilliant future that I see spreading out before me! Ah, I see forgiveness in your eye. For the sake of our little Margaret, be kind as you are strong."

Similarly in punching the pillows as she made the beds,

"Take that, varlet, and that, and again, varlet. Another time, think twice before you dare to cross the path of William Chasemore. I waste no speech on such as you, coward that you are. Speak but another word against her, and I'll give you such a trouncing that your mother shall disown you."

Perhaps the most desperate scene came on the evenings devoted to ironing. Miss Meers, having lost a collar in the wash, determined the laundry

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work should be done at home; another reason adduced was that this would be good training for Winnie.

"Ah, I have thee now in my power, false friend and breaker-up of my once happy home. Not a moment is to be lost; the contest shall decide whether you or me is to live to tell the tale. No quarter, my fine fellow. This is to be finished and done with, once for all!"

The best safety valve of all existed at Castle Road. It often made her tremble to think of her indebtedness to Castle Road.

On alternate Thursdays Winnie ran up High Street, directly after the young men from Covent Garden had finished dinner, and arrived at Mrs. Enefer's breathless. Mrs. Enefer dropping customers and giving up her seat in front of cash bowls to her daughter, took Winnie into the back room with a motherly "And how're you getting on by this time, my dear?" Always a good stock of grievances to impart, and Winnie found them less serious than she supposed on discovering that she could give an admirable imitation of Miss Meers' voice and manners, so that after the first twenty minutes Mrs. Enefer no longer had to give the sympathetic comments.

"It can't last for ever; that's the way you've got to look at it."

"She's evidently got an unfortunate manner, but she may be all right underneath."

"Glad you didn't answer her back; it would have only made her worse. You bide your time, that's your best plan."

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And the recital of woes and grievances became a mirthful entertainment, with the result that Miss Enefer could not bear to stay at the receipt of custom, but came in demanding to be furnished with all the particulars. Moltke, obtaining permission later to escort Winnie in the direction of the Crescent, asked on the way to be favoured in a like manner, and in this last repetition Winnie appeared as a triumphant and slightly supercilious domestic, retorting with consummate ease and dexterity to the whined complaints of a deferential mistress. Young Enefer said good-night at the corner of the Crescent; less polished than Arthur Lord, and something of a novice in the usages of refined society, he could not lift his hat without at the same time swinging his left leg.

The strenuous hard work of the place was recognised by the other inhabitants of Eighty-Seven, and Mr. Furley sometimes gave her a shilling: on the August Bank Holiday Mr. Gray and Mr. Chasemore left on the breakfast table before going out with their bicycles a solid, important five-shilling piece, with a line on the back of an envelope dedicating it to the use of Winnie; two-and-sixpence came from the other room on the second floor. This half-crown, handed in later at the post office and grocer's in Hampstead Road—where the clerk accused her of a desire to become a millionaire, and warned her that someone would marry her for the sake of money—this half-crown was certainly well earned. Telegrams had shuttled to and fro one important morning, and Miss Harburtone begged Winnie to write the replies because her hand, trembling with the long-deferred excitement, refused to control the pen. A

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question of ten shillings created some difference of opinion, but Miss Harburtone never had gone out for two pounds a week, and declined to allow it to be said, or even rumoured, that her salary was going down; refused to listen to Winnie's contention that two pounds a week had the advantage over nothing at all, and in the result, at 5.18 p.m., her obstinacy found itself justified. Miss Harburtone took an omnibus immediately in the direction of Maiden Lane, returned with a brown paper cover scrip, which she hugged affectionately. She was to play a lodging-house servant, with one excellent scene in Act Three, where, by production of a missing letter, she put everything so completely right that it seemed as though misunderstandings could never by any possibility again occur. Her sister, home with a tired-out right hand from the silver shop in Oxford Street, received the news shouted from the area, and went two steps at a time upstairs to the second floor, where the important event was celebrated by a good cry. On the following evening, tears came again.

"It's all over, Winnie," said Miss Harburtone mournfully. "I shall have to go back to business; I can see it clearly."

"What's happened?"

"I rehearsed with the book," explained the young woman, her fist pressed first at one eye and then at the other. "That didn't matter, although the others were word perfect. Of course, they've been rehearsing for some time. But as I came away the dreadful man came up to me, and he said——"

"Use mine," said Winnie. "It's only the day before yesterday's."

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The other took the handkerchief. "He said, 'Miss Harburtone, I think it fair to tell you that you're not a bit like it!' I thought I should have gone right off in a faint, but," helplessly, "I didn't."

"Did he say what was wrong?"

"Said—said I was too well bred."

"Look here!" said Winnie masterfully. "We can soon alter that. Give me that brown paper book."

"Don't tear it up," implored Miss Harburtone, "I shall have to hand it back."

"No, you won't. Not if you've got enough sense about you to watch me. Now, look here, I'll read this to you—the old girl's out shopping—I'll read this to you, and what you've got to do is to get as near like me as you possibly can."

In addition to the half-crown, representing a gratitude that gold would have failed to convey, Miss Harburtone begged that Winnie should have the run of her bookcase during the time occupied by the tour; also that if she desired on any special occasion of state to costume herself in a notable way, the dresses hanging from the pegs and the hats in the cardboard boxes under the bed were at her disposal. Winnie overheard the landlady tell the departing Miss Harburtone that the greatest mistake that could be made in dealing with a servant consisted in allowing her to think that she was indispensable; a strictly confidential admission followed the statement. Miss Meers' system of voice production being better than she knew, this added remark found in the kitchen a quick-eared listener, who, perceiving that the day of her reward, the prize distribu-

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tion, the investment of honours for long hours of steady work, approached near, solicited the favour of the company of a Windsor chair, and enjoyed a few steps of a waltz.

"At the same time," she heard Miss Meers say, when the Windsor chair was allowed to stop to regain its breath, "capital as she is, and honest as she may be, I shall never let her be in the house alone."

Confident now of her position, she mentioned to Miss Meers that evening, glancing out of the arched window of the ground-floor front, that, in regard to a new landlady at the house where lived Miss Enefer's uncle (who had been taken over with the other fixtures), the neighbourhood might be good enough for some, but not good enough for others. Miss Meers, alarmed, put down a cup of tea, and entreated her to explain herself with lucidity. Winnie obeyed, and spoke enthusiastically of the West End, of houses where so many as six or eight servants were kept. Miss Meers, in showering contumely upon the West End, lowered her tones to talk scandal, invited Winnie to sit down and take a cup out of her pot, help herself to thin bread-and-butter, and not to be afraid of the strawberry jam. Winnie preferred to start with cake, and this shocking innovation made her mistress pause for a moment; recovering, she gave a signal of consent, and proceeded to give her views of Mayfair, Kensington, and Bayswater; views unprejudiced apparently by excessive first-hand knowledge. What Miss Meers particularly deplored in the houses referred to was the entire absence of friendliness between mistress and maid, the obstinate resolution on the part of titled ladies to treat their servants as

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though the servants were but machines made of iron or steel. Moreover, said Miss Meers piously, one text ought always to be borne in mind: she quoted it reverently, and Winnie promptly pointed out that she was not a rolling stone, and she was not engaged in making a collection of moss; what she desired was to be in a large house where the staff of servants would permit of a fair distribution of work, and opportunities for a brief rest in the afternoon.

"Now, don't let's get excited," said Miss Meers, pleating the tablecloth with trembling fingers. "Let's keep quite calm, and thresh it all out quietly. What you really want, Winnie, is to be allowed a follower. I can see quite clear what you're driving at. Well," impartially, "I suppose it's natural. If you're properly engaged to somebody, and your parents approve——"

"There isn't a young man of my acquaintance that I should care to ask here."

Miss Meers made a dash at a fly with a taste for home-made jam, and missed it. "Tell me what you want," she urged piteously, "and let's get it over."

"I'm thinking about leaving you."

"Whatever for?"

"To better myself." Winnie held her breath as Miss Meers adjusted the tea-cosy and stroked it.

"I've worked you hard," said the landlady, with deliberation, "and I've found out in that way what you're made of. My manner may seem a bit harsh, but I'm the sort that improves on acquaintance. Two pounds a year more, and commencing to-morrow morning we'll share and share alike in the housework. If you want to go out of an evening, you've only to ask,

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and to take care that you're in on the stroke of ten. Let me fill up your cup for you, my dear. Two lumps, I think?"

It seemed appropriate that the first post on the day of a new era should bring an envelope with a welcome postmark. No letter, but a cabinet photograph of Corporal Garland, looking as one just appointed to the command of the British Army, and about to institute some drastic reforms. It was really but one-half of a photograph, for it had been cut at the centre, and a large dismembered hand, apparently that of a comrade, rested on Bert's square shoulder.

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## CHAPTER XIV

"The proportion of men to women in England and Wales is as 15 to 16."
*Whitaker's Almanack*

NEXT door, on both sides, young women eagerly demanded over the walls to be supplied with information; Winnie told them it had all been done by kindness. Miss Meers took her turn at the wash-tub on Monday mornings, and the girl, whistling, excepting when her mouth was filled with clothes-pegs, hung the garments on the line. On other Monday mornings, when Winnie rinsed and soused and pummelled and rubbed the clothes (achieving all this now without the aid of the short four-legged stool), Miss Meers, praying for a southerly wind and unclouded sky, decorated and flagged the alleged garden. (Another year, said Winnie, an effort would have to be made to grow flowers there, and perhaps scarlet-runners; Miss Meers, detecting here a suggestion of permanency, agreed that Winnie should have a free hand in the sowing of seeds.) Mrs. Furley, driven into activity by Winnie's satire and reproaches, found a house off Camden Road, and her husband on arriving home the last Saturday gave Winnie half a sovereign, declaring that this did not by any means repay his indebtedness. The Apartments card being placed in the window, calls



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at the house became numerous, and final evidence of the new scheme of management was made clear when Miss Meers announced that no tenant of the first floor would be accepted who did not meet with Winnie's approval. Miss Meers said she was not going to accept Tom, Dick, or Harry, nor (inferentially) Sal, Trix, or Polly; she had money put by in the bank, where it was of course as safe as houses, and rather than let to any but the most desirable, she preferred to allow the rooms to remain empty for a time. As the two gave the first floor what they called a thorough dressing down, Miss Meers, in the intervals of a not entirely successful endeavour to sing alto to some of Winnie's melodies (she admitted her voice was not what it had been in young and chapel days), enforced the principle of thrift—"many a meckle makes a mackle," she quoted.

Smart young women came with hair that seemed unable to decide upon a colour, and were arrested in the early stages of a swift rush of autobiography, given in tones of extraordinary refinement, with a "Thanks, but we don't take theatricals!" which caused them, in going, to speak a few words in a more natural voice. Ladies of a mature age came with fiery countenance, and the cork of a bottle peeping shyly out of a handbag, explaining that their husbands made them an allowance as slight recognition of the incompatibility of tempers, and on these too the door was promptly closed. Military-looking gentlemen did not know for how long they might require the rooms, but perfect and absolute quiet was necessary, and Winnie's demand for inspection of the last rent book

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usually induced these to say, with some confusion, that they would think it over and call again. A case in which the two judges disagreed, and, contrary to legal precedent, the decision of the junior was allowed to stand on record, consisted of a couple who had been married over a year: the young husband, an electrical engineer, and on his dressing-case a design of which Winnie and Miss Meers could make nothing; the young wife of pleasant manners, but rather subdued; with them a mere speck of a baby girl; the infant managed to turn the scales as Winnie held them, outbalancing Miss Meers's antipathy to children and a gruesome prophecy to the effect that once children began to arrive they continued in the manner of hardy annuals. Miss Meers had to listen once more to reminiscences concerning the Masters boy.

"Shouldn't mind being a mother," declared Winnie.

"How you do let your tongue run on!" cried the landlady, shocked. "At your age I should never have dared to say such an awful thing, no matter what I might have thought. Do be careful what you say, there's a dear."

"Don't you be frightened about me," said Winnie. "I'm not looking for trouble just now."

"You must get out and about more," urged Miss Meers.

Arthur Lord, tired of begging for the honour of conducting her for an outing, intimated formally that he did not propose to ask again, and this being said in the presence of Mrs. Enefer's son, that youth broke his rule of silence; invited to repeat his remark with distinctness, Moltke growled that he was prepared

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and ready and willing to take on the job. Winnie decided it would partake of the nature of a joyous experiment to be escorted by two gentlemen, assuming that they could come to terms on the subject, and a whispered conference in the corner of the shop parlour, mainly on the point of financial estimates, enabled them to state that so soon as Winnie was ready they would be ready. Wednesday week? Wednesday week would suit.

And on that evening at five Arthur Lord waited at the north end of the Crescent, whilst Moltke waited at the south end, a solemn bond having been entered into by each party to bring the lady to the other so soon as she had been intercepted and caught. Miss Meers saw Winnie off from the front steps with the usual reminder to be sure not to forget to enjoy herself, and the young mother on the first floor gave the assistance necessary to enable the small baby girl to blow a kiss. This first outing of Winnie's, so far as the Crescent was concerned, reached the proportions of a public event: the two Covent Garden men said the previous evening at dinner that they hoped she would have fine weather; Miss Gray warned her not to miss the switchback, and the old lady on the top floor cautioned her to beware of pickpockets. At the moment of starting an open carriage stopped in front of the house, and a footman stepped down and addressed an inquiry to Miss Meers; the young mother on the first floor vanished suddenly from the window. Winnie, recalling the fact that she was for the evening an independent person, disregarded these happenings, and, as she went, noticed that heads were

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jutting out, and necks were being twisted, and bodies were leaning over balconies in the endeavour to lose nothing of a distinguished and notable event recalling to old inhabitants the Crescent's palmy days.

Girls called "Give us half!" and "Greedy, greedy!" as she went along George Street with a male companion on either side, little guessing that their comments created high satisfaction. The party descended into the thick smoke of the underground station, Arthur Lord, ignoring the advice to keep his mouth shut and talking on railway matters with the confidence of an expert, giving figures to prove each and every statement; young Enefer looking on with dumb envy at this easy flow of language. In the train Moltke did venture to say he understood Venice was a town which remained under water for a good deal of the time, but he refused to be saddled with the responsibility for this statement, contending that it never did to believe anything that you heard, or more than half of what you saw. Moltke counselled hesitation in accepting any reports that came from abroad; he had once been by steamer to Boulogne, and the two hours on shore there compelled him to arrive at the conclusion that it was a most difficult thing to arrive at any conclusion at all. Winnie suggested, in regard to foreigners, there were probably good and bad as with us; she would like to go some day to the Continent, and see for herself. At present she knew nothing of it. Young Enefer recommended that people generally would do well to imitate Winnie, and talk only of matters of which they had knowledge.

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"There's a certain class," he said deliberately, as the train jerked on from Baker Street, "that are all jaw. That's what they are; all jaw. When they're not talking they're uncomfortable, and when they are talking they make other people uncomfortable."

"That meant for me?" demanded Arthur Lord, leaning across.

"You know best what size you take in caps."

"I asked a civil question."

"You've come to the wrong shop for a civil answer."

"Look here, you two," interposed Winnie good-humouredly, "you've got to behave yourselves this evening. You're taking a lady out, and you've got to show how well-mannered and polite you can be. Any more of this, and I leave you both and go by myself."

"Make him leave off talking," urged young Enefer. "I've got half a mind——"

"True!" cried Arthur; "and half of your mind doesn't amount to much."

Each adopted the precaution, so soon as Addison Road was reached, of addressing no word to the other; if it became necessary for the parcels clerk to put a question to the young greengrocer, he presented it to Winnie, by whom it was transferred in sometimes a slightly altered form, that subtracted from it any suggestion of contempt. The youths paid alternately, and Winnie kept a careful eye on all this, declining to go on a gondola because of the expense, barring some other joys on the same grounds. Beaming with delight, she declared, as they sat near to the band-stand, she had no idea that in the month of September it was



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possible to collect such a number of aristocratic and respectable people. Arthur Lord hastened to observe that he should be sorry to vouch for the good reputation of all around them.

"And it's very funny I should have made that remark," slapping his knee, "for over on the opposite side, where I'm pointing——"

"Be quiet," she ordered quickly. "You shout as though you were arguing against religion on Hampstead Heath. And what do you mean by what you were saying?"

"What I meant was, the coincidence was funny."

"What coincidence?"

"Yes," said young Enefer truculently, "what coincidence?"

"Why," he explained, with uneasiness, "you know what I mean. No offence intended. Talking of respectable people, and seeing one of your half-brothers——"

She looked across anxiously. Her breathing stopped for a moment.

"I apologise," said Arthur Lord, after a pause, with humility. "Can't say more than that. I'm very sorry if annoyance has been caused where none was intended. Here he is, coming across this way."

She occupied herself with the lace of her shoe, noting from the corner of her eye that Jim was well-dressed, that he carried a black ebony walking-stick, with a thick and heavy-looking handle. His boots went silently on the ground.

"He saw me!" exclaimed Lord, rising excitedly. "He caught sight of me, but I don't think he fixed

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me for the moment. Now, my best plan will be to go and ask him whether he knows where you are, and pretend I haven't seen anything of you for months."

"Stay here!"

"But I'm so good at this sort of thing," he remarked confidently. And darted off.

Young Enefer, showing sudden fluency, remarked there were several kinds and degrees of fools, and that in his opinion the only kind that could be called dangerous was the fool who thought himself clever. For his part, he counted himself amongst those who, being fools, were under no sort of misapprehension, but recognised the fact, openly and squarely. He did not wish to brag, but he felt bound, in fairness to himself, to say that he stood a better chance of providing a home than did a clerk who simply sat at a desk, added up figures, and put down an incorrect total.

"Well?" Winnie looked around, as the other cavalier returned.

"Couldn't have managed it better," replied Arthur Lord exultantly. "Suppose I ought not to say it, but where anything like tact or diplomacy is required——"

"Did you have the sense to ask how my father was?"

"The old chap's well, wonderfully well. Just come out of the hospital."

"And they never wrote to tell me!" she cried alarmedly.

"They didn't know where to write. But I told him that in future, if anything happened, they could drop a line to me, and I'd see you had it."

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"That was wise of you," she conceded. "Jim doesn't know I'm here, then?"

"Am I a jay?" appealed Arthur Lord.

Young Enefer, foreseeing his rival was about to enter upon a declaration of self-praise, asked to be excused whilst he went in search of a cigar possessing the two qualities of cheapness and good flavour. "A dull dog," said the North Western youth, watching his departing rival. "I pity the girl who had to be his companion for the rest of her life; I mean to say a lively, high-spirited young woman with a sense of humour. Did I mention to you about myself, Winnie?"

"You generally do."

"I've got another half a crown a week increase."

"Good!" she remarked heartily.

"They're not giving me what I'm worth," he went on. "Far from it."

"If they paid you," said Winnie, "at your own valuation, there wouldn't be much left for the poor shareholders. Move up a bit; there's another couple want to find seats. And once more, do keep your voice down."

She watched apprehensively for the possible reappearance of Jim; sight of him had sent her thoughts to West Lane, had suggested anxieties that might descend upon her again at any moment. For months she had permitted herself to believe that the crushing blow delivered in regard to the Canadian trip represented the final effort; that no fresh attempt on their part could ever reach a like standard of importance; that henceforth they would leave her alone. Now, the winking lights, the rustle and movement of people, the swinging

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music from the band-stand, the laughter of girls—all these seemed to emphasise the fact that she could not reckon herself free and detached. Her battle was not over, a fresh challenge might come at any moment. She would somehow have to see father; the thought of him lying on a scarlet-covered bed in a long ward touched her, and her lips had to be pressed to restrain tears.

"And if you've followed my argument," went on Arthur Lord, speaking close to her ear, "you'll recognise how desirable it is, for the sake of all parties, that we should get married at once. We could take a house and let the best part of it, and you never being the one to mind hard work, we ought to make enough out of the lodgers to pay our rent, and that would leave my salary—you see what I mean? I shouldn't think of hurrying you, only my sister has no more idea how to put a shine on a pair of boots than she has of painting a landscape picture. And the great advantage," warming to his argument, and compelling the other couple to relinquish their own interests and to give the best powers of hearing to him, "the great and special advantage is that I'm not so particular as some. With me you haven't got to say, 'I'm sorry to tell you that my people are so-and-so and that my father is so-and-so.'"

"I'm not ashamed of father," she retorted quickly.

"Perhaps not," he admitted, with caution. "But you must admit that he and the others have played you some nasty tricks."

"Say what you like about the others, but don't you utter a word against father."

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"Same time," disconcerted by this fierceness, "it stands to reason that you want someone near you to give a word of advice when they come interfering."

"There's only one person I take advice from, and that's myself. I don't want anybody to interfere. It's my tussle, and I'm going to see it through. Try to understand that."

"Well, but——"

"I'm not cross," said Winnie, shaking out her skirts, "I'm only talking sense. And that's what some of you never seem to expect from a girl."

Enefer expressed the opinion that those who accepted the task of selling cigars at the Exhibition had learnt how to charge; nevertheless, he asked if he might take the liberty of offering a glass of port; Arthur Lord complained that he had been anticipated by the narrow space of a quarter of a second, and urged the claims of seniority in friendship and a glass of sherry; the other, content to point out that he had spoken first, suggested the decision should be left to the lady. Arthur remarked caustically on those who, having no ideas of their own, were ever on the lookout to snap up those of other folk; they were, so to speak, the parrots of mankind and, by rights, should be kept in a wire cage with a green cloth handy to be thrown over it when they talked too much. Young Enefer, on the other side of Winnie, admitted he was not extravagantly furnished with ideas, but he would have to be precious hard up for them ere he borrowed from one whose highest achievement he understood to be the pasting of wrong labels on parcels. The two wrangled,

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"Seems to me," she said definitely, "you've both got a good deal to learn in the way of behaviour. As regards refreshment, when I want any I shall have some, and not be beholden to either of you. And I shan't have port and I shan't have sherry; I shall have one of those long drinks with a straw in it. Now be good, and presently I'll show you my brother Bert's photograph."

She pointed out later that the improvement in their conduct subsequent to this reproof was good evidence that they knew how to behave well, and could behave well, if only they cared to make the endeavour. Some credit for the alteration should properly have been given to exhaustion, for she led them at a good pace from one quarter of the Exhibition to another; forced them to see everything that could be seen without special disbursement, and declared, on sitting down near a round metal table, that she felt as though she had been for a prolonged trip abroad. When she should find herself in a good situation she would, of course, travel with the family, and see Italy as it really existed, but in the meantime here was a substitute. The two young men, tipping back in their chairs, begged her to look again into the future, and find some other picture; she reminded them that earlier in the evening she had placed a penny in the slot of an automatic machine which guaranteed to give particulars concerning one's partner in life; the machine, after taking the penny, had refused, despite vigorous shaking, to carry out the contract.

"Don't be superstitious," they urged. "There's nothing in a mere circumstance like that. We've had

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it happen when we've been trying to get a box of matches."

"I know more about omens than most people," she said. "Let me count the pips in this lemon squash of mine."

Jim went by again as she was bending over her tumbler, and a cough from him caused her to look up. He had shaved and was walking upright, two reforms which effected such an improvement that those who knew him but slightly might have passed by without giving him recognition. Jim — it scarcely seemed possible, but one had to trust one's eyes — lifted his bowler hat deferentially and walked on. All of Winnie's accounts against him were paid by this act of politeness, and she felt greatly tempted to send one of her knights after him with an invitation to give the favour of his presence; young Enefer's interrogation concerning Bert's photograph stopped her in the impetuous action, and a moment's thought told her that Jim's company was not indispensable.

"Bert's a smart-looking chap," decided Arthur Lord.

"Like you about the chin," said young Enefer, entering into competition.

"It's his friend Wallis who has spoiled the picture," suggested Lord. "That's what made him cut it in halves."

"If I were you," said Enefer, "I should feel very much inclined to have it enlarged. For twenty-five bob, including the frame——"

"Cavalrymen are much superior to the line. Better class of men altogether."

"Cases have been known," said the other, determined not to be outdone, "of men in the ranks working their

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way up until they've become officers. I was reading about one only the other day—— Sitting in a draught?"

Winnie turned her head, and with a signal commanded silence.

"Sneeze on Wednesday," she quoted, recovering, "get a letter."

"Bless my soul," cried Enefer, making the glasses on the round table jump, "I seem to have no more memory for anything outside the business than nothing at all." He searched his pockets. "Mind you, where business is concerned, I never forget a single, solitary item, but in cases where—— Here it is! My mother gave it to me just before I came out, and she says, 'Now don't you bring it back with you and tell me that you forgot to give it her, or else I shall feel inclined to punish you.'"

Winnie snatched the letter from his hand, and at sight of the writing kissed it. Arthur Lord remarked that delays to correspondence constituted, in railway life, one of the sins rewarded with extreme punishment; a friend of his in the Up Parcels Office, for nothing more, had been sent away to a country station. It appeared that the retarded delivery in the present case mattered little, for the news contained in the letter was of the kind that a delay of a few hours could not affect its excellence. Bert in the note apologised for having mislaid the new address, and begged to say that he was coming up to town on Friday, and would Winnie please secure for him two of the cheapest booked seats at the Vaudeville Theatre.

"He must have guessed," she cried delightedly, "that I wanted to see the piece there. That proves to you how clever Bert is."

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He would settle for them in due course, and (with his usual brevity) he remained her fond, affectionate brother. The two showed keen competition for the honour of procuring the tickets, but Enefer had to admit that at the hour when he usually found himself in the neighbourhood of the Strand, box-offices were not open, and the theatres had not long been closed; to Arthur Lord, therefore, was the gratifying task assigned. Any idea that the favoured youth might have entertained of following up this by referring again to the topic discussed by him earlier in the evening was barred by the swift and ecstatic talk that Winnie broke into. Everything right; nothing amiss. Bert would be up on Friday, and Jim was behaving himself this evening. When young Enefer, in trying to replace the photograph, burst the cover, she declared it did not matter, and he tore the envelope, threw the pieces over his shoulder, and wrapped the photograph in his evening paper; it was Arthur Lord who, with great acumen, retrieved the fragments, pointing out in a loud voice the danger of allowing anyone to know that Winnie resided at Ninety-Four Mornington Crescent.

Miss Meers had prepared to complain gently of late arrival, but Winnie burst into a vivid account of the Exhibition, which arrested rebuke, and the landlady asked her to read from young Enefer's evening journal anything choice in the way of inquests and murders; Winnie complied readily, and extended her search into other columns.

"Goodness!" shrieked Miss Meers, starting up from a half-asleep condition. "Oh, what have I done to deserve this! To think that at my time of life!"

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"Simmer down!" ordered Winnie. "You're talking in your sleep."

"Do say you're making it up as you go along," craved the other on her knees. "I know what a one you are, dear, for a joke. It isn't really in the paper, is it?"

"I only read a bit about a run on a bank."

"It's my bank," wailed Miss Meers.

The incident affected others. Consternation seized nearly every floor. Miss Lane, alarmed by the disturbance, came down, and, informed of the cause, went instantly into hysterics. The new first floor, to whom a call had been made that afternoon from Hyde Park Gardens, confessed that her savings were in the same bank. Mr. Gray and Mr. Chasemore of Covent Garden Market stopped their game of nap, and said that if the news were true it meant putting them back a full three years. The old lady on the top floor fainted. Winnie, with her few pounds in the Savings Bank, alone remained calm.

The alarms next morning aroused Winnie, but awakened none of the others, for the good reason that the investors had not been able to close their eyes during the night. Mrs. Enefer's brother-in-law, who generally stopped to say a few cheery words to Winnie as she cleaned the steps, trotted by with only a hasty wave of the hand, muttering to himself, "Good heavens! Good heavens! Good heavens!" Miss Meers remarked in a quavering voice that she had always said she never would leave a girl alone in the house; she took some consolation in the thought that the first-floor baby would act as companion.

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## CHAPTER XV

"The accused said, in answer to the magistrate, that it was difficult to account for it: he could only suppose he was carried away by the impulse of the moment. The magistrate remarked that, for a change, he would now be carried away by the police van. (Laughter.)"—*Daily paper, page 4*

WINNIE and the mite of a baby of the first floor, left at home by those who had stampeded off to rescue savings, found friendship cemented by a clockwork cat, presented by the baby's grandmother, who had driven up the previous afternoon; encouraged by this willing and industrious animal, they looked upon a troubled world with equanimity. The clockwork cat was christened, receiving the name of Edith (after the baby's mother), Winnie (after the baby's friend), Chicks (after herself), surname Mornington; resolved that, as brief life was here our portion, it should be called Morny. The baby, allowed to come down into the kitchen, assisted in domestic work by continuous demands for winding. The cat had started on a new circular tour, escaping narrowly a gap in the linoleum, when the door of the kitchen pressed open slowly; Winnie, assuming it to be a tradesman's representative, cried without looking around a reminder that it was considered good manners to knock. A moment later



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two hands pressed over her eyes, and a nudge was given by somebody's knee.

"Guess who?"

"Drop it!" she ordered sharply. "Whoever it is has no business to do that." And ducking suddenly, escaped.

"Didn't expect to see me," said Jim.

"Didn't want."

"Come now," he said appealingly. "It's a goodish step all the way up here, and the least you can do is to act friendly. Do you know what I've called for?"

"Money!" she replied.

"Wrong," he declared boisterously. "I've called to wish you many 'appy returns."

"Is it my birthday?"

"So father says. Father was saying so only yesterday. So thinks I, as I overhears a remark at the Exhibition—— Stop that baby from 'owling."

"She isn't."

"She's jest going to. Ootchy kootchy," said Jim, with a clumsy attempt to conciliate the infant. "Have a look at the tick-tock. Listen to the tick-tock."

"Where did you get that watch from?"

"That's right," remarked Jim bitterly. "Give a dog a bad name, and you may as well——" He stopped. "Lor', but it is good to see you again. How've you been getting along all this time? We've often talked about you."

"Don't doubt it," she said, still upon her defence.

"And what's more, the others have asked me to bring this silver watch as a little memento, so to speak, a

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slight token, a," with a spasm of frankness, "a kind of a birthday present. That's what it's meant for."

"I had to put away my other one," she said, taking it. "I shall be able to get it out soon. Thank them all for me. I'm going to a wedding shortly, and it'll come in handy show off there."

Baby, relinquishing earlier intentions, gave signs of a desire to come to good terms by handing over the key and the toy; and Jim, kneeling, started the cat. Winnie looked on.

"You've improved," she said. "What's William like?"

"He's slow. That's what I complain about in regard to William. No enterprise."

"Been giving father any trouble lately, either of you?"

"Isn't it marvellous?" said Jim, looking at the clockwork cat, "isn't it a perfect wonder how they get these things up for the money? I should be very sorry to be called upon to set to, and make an article of that description."

He took it from the baby, who, astonished out of speech at this treatment, stared at him blankly. "Ingenious," went on Jim, "that's what I call it."

"What was wrong with father that he had to go into Guy's?"

"Often wish I was a kid again," he said, still examining. "Sweet little curly-'aired youngster I was, so I'm told. Funny thing how we all start fair, so to speak, and how one will run straight and another—— No, we don't!" contradicting himself, and beginning to stride up and down the kitchen. "We don't start fair.

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We don't get a chance from the very beginning. Look at me! Look at my case! S'posing I'd come into the world in this neighbourhood. S'posing my parents had been well-to-do. Why, I should have been looked after closely, shouldn't never have been allowed to get into mischief, should have gone to Eton and 'Arrow and Oxford and Cambridge, should never have known what it was to want for a bit of cash, should have been sitting, as you may say, in the lap of luxury. But what chances have I ever had?"

She snatched the toy from his hands, and gave it to the baby just in time to prevent an outburst.

"What chances have I ever had, I ask you?" Jim's voice took the South London whine. "My life's been an obstacle race, that's what my life has been. I've found nothing on the way but impediments." He brightened at the capture of a long word. "Impediments here, impediments there, impediments everywhere. And what's a chap entitled to do in circs like these? Why, he's entitled to hike the impediments out of the road by every means and by every what's-name in his power."

"Every fair means."

"Fair means be—— Beg pardon; forgot you objected to language. What I say is that he's bound to use every means, every possible means. If he's got a strong arm, let him swing it; if he's got a big foot, let him lift it. I could argue the question," said Jim, rubbing his damp forehead, "and I could make my meaning a lot clearer if you hadn't got such old-fashioned objections to a man using the words that he's got in his mind, and if you'd only stop fiddlin' about when I'm talking to you."

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"I can listen and go on with my work at the same time," remarked Winnie. She lifted the sash of the window and rubbed the outside of the panes. "What's happened to upset you?"

"Nothing!"

"You don't usually have so much to say for yourself. Would you like a thick sandwich and a glass of ale?"

"I could do with a bite. What I mean is I've got no objection to taking some slight refreshment. Shouldn't be so peckish, only I had no breakfast this morning."

"Hadn't you any money?"

"I could also do with a bit of a doss. 'Alf an hour's rest on a sofer would make a different man of me."

"If it has that effect," said Winnie, "it seems worth trying." She thought for a moment. "You can go up, or, rather, I'll take you up, to the second-floor front, and you can take off your boots and have a good rest. The young lady who has that room is out all day. Mind you don't touch anything that doesn't belong to you."

"You needn't pass unkind remarks."

Winnie asked the baby girl to be good, and for better preservation of admirable conduct tied her with a towel to the leg of the table; the baby thought this a good joke, and laughed. Jim laughed too, and producing some coins from his pocket, handed over a penny as anticipatory reward for excellent conduct. Winnie asked what was meant by the presence of gold, and Jim inquired whether she was not aware that La Flèche had won the St. Leger; he prophesied that it would

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also win the Lincolnshire Plate, and urged her to communicate this to all her friends. She took him up to the room of Miss Harburtone's sister, where the costumes were hanging under a linen cover, and two minutes later she brought a plate and a tumbler, but Jim was asleep—fast asleep, with one arm free and the hand nearly touching the carpet, apparently dreaming of triumphant selection of the right and fastest horse, for there was a smile on his features that he rarely wore. Two sovereigns had dropped from his pocket to the floor. Winnie picked them up and replaced them.

"You're not altogether a bad sort," she said, looking at him. "I don't mean you're a model of good behaviour, but there's worse about if anybody wanted to find them. Expect if I had a little more tact I should be able to get on with the whole lot of you."

She repeated this in various forms as she did some ironing in the kitchen, and the first-floor infant, released from captivity, now and again agreed; a certain want of dexterity in using the English language would have clouded the intention of her arguments in the sight of most people, but Winnie affected to be able to translate. When the young mother let herself in with a latch-key, and called aloud, the baby crawled swiftly by the aid of a dexterous side stroke to the farther side of the dresser, appealing to Winnie with a look. Winnie moved an eyelid as promise of secrecy. The young mother came down to the kitchen, still calling and saying—

"Where's my boo'ful girlie? Where's she gone? Mamma can't find her!"



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A nod gave permission to enter the kitchen, and there the baby had the greatest difficulty in concealing evidence of hilarity on peeping out from the hiding-place, and observing that her parent, with gratifying stupidity, searched in the coal scuttle, on the mantelpiece, under the brass candlesticks, and in other improbable corners.

"Do you know where my precious is gone, Winnie?" Winnie shook her head with a fine imitation of despair. "I've lost her!" declared the baby's mother, affecting great concern. "I've lost her, I've lost her!" The baby, unwilling to tear a mother's heart to pieces, gave a clue by crying, "Bo!" she turned and caught her up, saying, "Why, here she is all the time!" and the two, their faces together, cooed expressions of delight and congratulation. The young woman ordered her daughter to give Winnie a good kiss as payment for the performance of duties as guardian, and this done, she told Winnie that so soon as Miss Meers returned, notice would be given of a desire to leave the rooms at the earliest date convenient to both parties. Winnie asked for information. What had happened at Hyde Park Gardens? Why, replied the other, everything; everything that should happen in a well-ordered and genially-governed world. Her husband's mother had taken the first wise step, after a series of blunders on both sides, by calling and by bringing as offer of peace the clockwork cat; she herself had followed this up that morning on withdrawing cash in Chancery Lane by paying her first visit to the old people, and Sir Walter—Winnie opened her eyes widely on finding that a title could be uttered without any reverential

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lowering of the voice—Sir Walter listened to the account of the crisis at the Bank, inquired the amount invested there both on current and deposit account, and finding the young couple had actually managed to save money during the brief space of their married life, ordered perfect silence for a few minutes; then announced that his boy was to return instantly to Number Sixty-Five Hyde Park Gardens, bringing with him a wife and a baby; a sufficient portion of the house would be set aside for their use and convenience. She tried to protest, but Sir Walter—a man who imputed his success in the world to the fact that he had always gained his own way—exhibited the emphasis and decision in restoring to favour that he had previously shown in expelling.

"Glad you've got good luck," said Winnie heartily. "Best thing you can do will be to take me with you."

"Will you come?" asked the other at once.

"I was only joking," she explained. "My style isn't good enough for Hyde Park Gardens. I should shock them."

"You could easily acquire the manner."

"Couldn't possibly keep it up all the time."

"They don't have to," argued the other. "It's only whilst they are waiting at table or speaking to the people upstairs; at other times they use their ordinary voice and manner."

Winnie gazed at the scarlet soldier and the blue sweetheart in the oval space of the grocer's almanac, then at the clockwork cat, then at the baby girl. She looked earnestly at the baby. "I'd rather marry," she said thoughtfully, "if I find the right man. I don't,

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as a rule, talk to other people about myself, but I rather think I have got hold of the right one. One who will stick close by me through thick and thin."

"They're rare!"

"It don't do to let 'em know that," she said acutely. "It don't do to speak too much about anything. And if I stand here much longer talking to you Miss Meers will come home and find nothing done."

Miss Meers, returning at that moment holding with both hands a canvas bag of money, burst into tears of real thankfulness as she dropped into an easy-chair in the sitting-room, but declared her nerves would never again be what they had been antecedent to this upset. She did not see how she could possibly regain that serenity of mind to which she had, rightly or wrongly, hitherto laid claim. She was not certain she would have sense enough to eat her lunch when it should be brought up to her. Winnie acted upon this hint, and Miss Meers begged her to share the meal in the sitting-room.

The story of the run on the Bank proved so interesting at each repetition that it was not until Winnie heard a lad crying "Two-thirty winner" that Jim came back to her thoughts. She ran to the window to catch a glimpse of the placard; evidently she had missed one of an earlier edition, for this one proclaimed "Hammersmith Burglary: Latest."

"Now, you put your feet up on the sofa," she advised, "and close your eyes for a few minutes, and you'll feel all the better for it afterwards."

"I shall wake up cross."

"Not with me."

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"What were you going to say about the people overhead?"

"That can wait," said Winnie, "until after you've had your nap."

Winnie took up a blouse to be worn at the impending marriage of Miss Enefer; agitation prevented her from making progress. It occurred to her that money was now in the house; that Jim was in the house, and the conjunction made her shiver with anxiety. Miss Meers, awaking presently and looking out of the window, asked who the woman was coming from the area with a parcel; Winnie ran downstairs to ascertain whether some stray hawker had come to dispose of goods, and finding the kitchen empty had, perhaps, instead added to stock. When the girl returned with no information Miss Meers, half-way up the staircase, announced she had determined to go over the house; something in her bones seemed to tell her a man was concealed in one of the rooms. Winnie followed two steps at a time, reaching her as she opened the door of the second-floor front. Jim had gone.

"Now my mind's at rest," said Miss Meers, looking in. "As I say, I never like leaving a girl alone. When you get time, Winnie, just put those dresses of Miss Harburtone's a bit straight. They look untidy! Tell me now about the first floor and tell it distinctly. I'm so flustered I don't seem to hear half what's said to me."

"I'm flustered too."

"I take that very kind of you," said Miss Meers gratefully.

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A day which promised to be crowded with events opened with a regrettable incident. Winnie assured the baby she had hunted high and low, and even went so far as to slap herself severely for failure, but the awkward fact remained that Morny, the clockwork cat, had disappeared, and could not be found. Baby, answering the usual question, managed by wild gesture to intimate that she well remembered where she had last seen it, and the exact spot in the kitchen was pointed out by her, an action followed by an earnest appeal to adults and urgent recommendations to put their best efforts into the task. The baby found some difficulty in inducing them to concentrate attention on the subject, for an immediate removal had to be arranged, and around the Crescent news ran that Miss Meers was losing her first floor again; those who had in the past been stung by the sharp tongue of Miss Meers remarked it jolly well served her right, and they hoped it would be Domesday ere she let it again; a few, who had escaped, said it was hard, with rates and taxes to be paid, that the occupants of furnished rooms could not be induced to remain in them for more than half a second at a time. Meanwhile, Hyde Park Gardens appeared anxious to mend its family differences without any further postponement, and drove up twice in its carriage and pair, to the considerable interest of tramcar traffic in Hampstead Road, the second time bringing Sir Walter himself. Sir Walter, with an effort to conceal anxiety by a brusque manner that would not have deceived the missing clockwork cat, honoured the Crescent by descending from the carriage and entering the hall, where, still desirous of hiding nervous-

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ness, he became an art critic, and during the time that his wife was upstairs, an authority on wall papers.

"Done very well, hitherto," retorted Winnie. "Perhaps you don't know much about these matters?"

Sir Walter stared at her over his glasses, amazed to find servants were capable of talking in any tones other than those indicating slight physical pain and complete subjection.

"What I mean is," she continued, one hand resting on the banisters, "you're entitled, of course, to have your own opinions, same as everyone else; but it can't matter a little bit what you think of our pictures. It's us who've got to live with 'em, not you. Supposing" with a patient desire to prove the reasonableness of her contention "supposing I came to your place, and I walked in and began squinting around and turning up my nose—— What's that?"

"I want you," he said, measuring the time carefully, "to go upstairs. And ask how much longer I am to be kept. In this confounded draught."

"Give the front door a touch with your heel," she said, "and it'll go to. In regard to the other matter, she and the baby are not going to hurry. Heard her tell her husband so this morning when she went out."

"Are you her maid?"

Winnie shook her head. "Wouldn't mind the job," she remarked, "if she thought I was tall enough."

"I particularly want," said the old gentleman confidentially, "to see her and the child settled in Hyde Park Gardens to-day. My boy will be sure to come

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on if he finds they are there. Now, if I give you a sovereign——"

She laughed. "Watched it done on the stage," she declared, "but, upon my word, I never thought of seeing money change hands like this in private life."

"You'll do your best?"

"She'll be out and in the carriage in less than five minutes," said Winnie.

Before the order "Home" was given to the coachman, Winnie reminded the young mother that she had not actually pledged her word that there was scarlet fever next door but one; all she had said was there might be; possible that the doctor was attending the children for nothing more serious than a cold. The other, holding her well wrapped up baby affectionately, replied that she quite understood; her husband was to be told on arriving at the Crescent that she had decided to take no risks. She wished Winnie were coming with them, and the old gentleman said, "Easily arranged, easily arranged!" a comment which the girl resented.

"I'm not going to be passed round like cake," she said, anticipating the footman in the duty of closing the carriage door. "Bye-bye, baby. Give your Winnie a kiss. Good-bye all. Be good."

She heard Sir Walter remark, as the carriage drove off and the footman folded his arms, that someone was a character.

The postman came with a letter, and handing it to Winnie as he watched the departing carriage, said the number of offers of marriage she was receiving constituted a serious strain on the Post Office arrangements. Winnie opened it, read it, and sat down helplessly on the chair

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in the hall. Bert wrote to say that he had received the tickets safely, and was taking his young lady, as arranged. Wallis had left the regiment, leaving him without a chum, and no one in this world could do without company. Bert hoped to bring his young lady one day to see Winnie, and he trusted that his young lady and Winnie would get on well together. He felt sure he could trust Winnie for that.

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## CHAPTER XVI

*"If no impediment be alleged then shall the Curate say,*
Wilt thou——"

SUNSHINE and holiday and a dashing air of recklessness had taken possession of Castle Road, with a touch of pride and more than a suspicion of stately magnificence Mrs. Enefer said, and said it definitely, and said it more than once, that a daughter of hers did not get married every day, and the inference correctly gained by Castle Road was that something notable in weddings would take place. Unmarried ladies sneered at the two carriages with whips decorated by white satin bows, and declining to believe that the movement up and down the road was for the sake of keeping the horses warm, said that certain people were all for show, that some did not know where to draw the line; a certain modesty in these matters became everybody.

The shop opened in the morning, and Moltke in an old jacket which emphasised the newness and the brilliance of the remainder of his costume, set out fruit, and, in the foreground, sieves; placed diamond-shaped cards on the contents of various departments in sloped trays, swept the pavement and sawdusted the shop, but anxiety in regard to his necktie prevented him from giving the usual attention to business, and three times



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he walked along to give an earnest look at his reflection in the hairdresser's window. The chief bridesmaid, stepping from a tramcar with a word of protest because the polite conductor touched her sleeve, caught him at this, and edged him aside with the remark that she wished to give the glass a treat; young Enefer surprised her, and astonished himself by the swift production of a choice compliment.

"So you think I'm looking nicer than ever, do you?"

"Didn't I say so?" protested Moltke.

She rattled on with questions. Had the other bridesmaid arrived? At what time did they start? How many would there be at the breakfast? Was her bouquet ready? Had his uncle arrived? Where would they be taken for a drive? She had to be back by six, but she was free until then. The chief bridesmaid, dancing up the stairs ready to take charge of the whole of the preliminaries and furnished with a double-handful of superstitions and omens appropriate to the day, found herself checked by introduction to a severe, punctilious lady who, seated on the edge of the bed, had already assumed control, ousting Mrs. Enefer and the second bridesmaid, and issuing orders as might have done Wellington, to whom she bore some other resemblance. Arrived, it appeared, at a sufficiently early hour by a workman's train, she was sketching out, as Winnie entered, a plan of action to be adopted if the bridegroom instead of coming to the church to be married decided to run off with somebody's wife; after accepting introduction of the chief bridesmaid with a slight twitch of her Roman nose, indicating surprise

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and disappointment, she took up again the discussion which had been interrupted. Her contention was that the bride who, rounder of cheek and shinier than ever, stood near the dressing-table, fully apparelled and holding a spray of flowers, should drink now and at once half a glass of wine, no more and no less, and on the bride protesting that she did not require this stimulant, Aunt Bertha said imperatively it must be taken; quoted her own case as precedent, and attributed to forethought in this regard the fact that she did not make an exhibition of herself by swooning at the altar.

"But it flies straight to my head," argued the bride.

"You're an obstinate girl," said Aunt Bertha sternly, "that's what I call you. If you'd been brought up properly——"

"What's that?" interposed Mrs. Enefer.

"I was saying," explained Aunt Bertha, hedging, "that having been brought up properly, she ought to recognise that until she's actually married, it's her duty to do as she's told. If I'd a daughter of my own I should be talking to her in the same manner that I'm talking to yours. Pour out at once, just up to the pretty, and make her drink it! And cut her a piece of the cake."

"That's unlucky," said Winnie.

"You don't say so!" cried the aunt, nearly slipping from the side of the bed. "I'd no idea. I knew that if anybody else tried on the bride's veil it was a warning of something, and I've been told that if she puts on the right shoe first it means——"

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"I can tell you all about these things," interrupted Winnie masterfully. "What I don't know concerning them isn't worth learning. Sit over there on that chair in the corner, and don't speak until you're spoken to. Come along," to the other bridesmaid. "Let's start afresh and put everything right."

The two bridesmaids busied themselves with their charge; the second mentioned that Winnie had arrived in the very nick of time; so small a space as half a second, and she, the second bridesmaid, would have been tempted to say something that, once spoken, might have resulted in lifelong regrets. The two urged the bride not to be nervous, and Miss Enefer assured them that she had rarely felt more self-possessed; what she specially desired was the slightest touch of powder to reduce the appearance of rude health, but mother and aunt would not hear of such a thing. Winnie sent Mrs. Enefer downstairs to tell the coachmen to be in readiness for departure, and directed the aunt's attention to a place on the ceiling where the damp had come through; the second bridesmaid produced a small puff from her hand-bag, and with a dexterous sweep gave the required touch of pallor. The bride declared that now she did not mind encountering the criticism of Castle Road. Aunt Bertha stopped a realistic account of her last attack of rheumatism, to point out that the eyes of a lady proceeding to church on an occasion like this should be downcast; she herself also looked steadily in the direction of the ground on coming out of church, but being the last person to dictate to others, she felt willing to leave this open, to be decided by taste, fancy,

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and discretion. The aunt produced her offering, and the bride said, very properly, that a medallion of an un-named gentleman in naval uniform of the early part of the century was the very present she had been wishing for all along. Aunt Bertha was now all for hurrying away to church, asserting that she knew what gentlemen were like when kept waiting, but the bridesmaids advised deliberation, and the second—a pleasant girl, whose occupation in life, so she informed Winnie, was to stay at home and help mother—remembered to have heard of a gruesome instance where a lady, having reached the church before the arrival of the bridegroom, took with her parents a back pew and waited and waited and waited until at last——

"Something's happened to Mr. Chapman!" wailed Miss Enefer, with an effort to regain popular attention. "I'm as sure as I stand here that he's met with an accident. Don't tell me he hasn't, because I know better. I can shut my eyes and see him being carried off a mangled mass!"

They clucked around her, begging her not to give way to these foolish fancies, but to be brave, and not to spoil her good looks. She declined to be comforted, and appealed to Winnie to explain why she should have the premonition unless something of the kind had actually happened; Winnie must know, better than most, that this was just the method in which disastrous events were communicated. Mrs. Enefer came with the news that Castle Road showed signs of impatience; it seemed high time they made a start; and, realising the situation, said that unless this nonsense ended instantly it would be her duty to exercise

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for the last time maternal control, and give the bride a jolly good shaking. So the nonsense stopped, and Moltke being assisted with his coat—ready-made suits in future for him, he declared; a tailor gave overmuch trouble to the task of providing a man with a fit; caused one to feel like a trussed fowl—the party went out, to be sorted into the two carriages under Winnie's directions.

"Hooray!" cried Castle Road, waving hands and handkerchiefs. "Good luck to you!" Winnie stopped the bride in the extremely unlucky act of re-tying a shoelace.

Arthur Lord, guarding his man sternly, relaxed as the ladies arrived, and meeting Winnie, mentioned to her in an undertone that it ought to have been a double wedding; on Winnie replying that he should have consulted the second bridesmaid, he looked at her in a pained way, saying that she had missed the point of his remark. Mr. Chapman, with a complexion that his bride envied, dropped gloves, hat, and Church service, and finding a handkerchief with which to rub his white face, dropped the handkerchief also, thus making the recovery well worth undertaking; he looked wistfully at the open doors at the back, and at a stained-glass window. Turning, he opened his book at the Private Baptism of Infants, gave a shrug of determination, and hummed until checked by frowns. The chief bridesmaid, not being of those who encourage disturbance of nerves, listened to the words of the service. The chief bridesmaid, with the feeling of contentment that new clothes bring, recognised the stately language, and thought it well selected; the

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address at the end laid itself open, perhaps, to the charge of excessive candour, but, after all, it was not her wedding. The chief bridesmaid, a girl with all the sentiment that the apparently matter-of-fact possess, wondered when she herself would be kneeling there on the hassock, and, with a happy catch of breath, hoped that Arthur Lord would show finer elocutionary powers than those exhibited by Chapman. The chief bridesmaid, accustomed to plan carefully, wondered upon whom she could confer the honourable position she now occupied, and thought out rapidly a scheme for keeping Bermondsey in ignorance of the event.

"Whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."

They were all slightly hysterical on the return at Castle Road, and everybody kissed everybody, except young Moltke, whose mother said he was too young to indulge in the sport. Aunt Bertha had to admit it had gone well, but argued that it would have gone better if her counsel in regard to the half of a wine-glass had been accepted. Mr. Chapman, on being taxed, stoutly denied the imputation of want of confidence during the service; he announced himself ready to get married every morning of his life. Practice made perfect. Mr. Chapman was continuing in this vein, when the new Mrs. Chapman, hitherto a safe and an easily amused audience, said sharply, "That's not funny!" and he stopped. Breakfast had been laid out in the shop parlour, laid out it would seem by fairies or by Maskelyne and Cook, unless one was prepared to believe that the bride and her mother had risen that morning at half-past five.

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Uncle drove up in his dog-cart just as they were making solemn affidavits to the effect that he had forgotten all about the event; he took an envelope from the inside pocket of his coat, and the new Mrs. Chapman accepting it and opening it, cried, flourishing a cheque,

"Oh, mother, mother! Look, look! It can't be true; it can't be true!"

And the bridegroom, genuinely moved, said,

"Very handsome of you, sir. Very handsome, indeed. Don't know how to thank you, sir." The uncle waved their acknowledgments aside, and remarked that but for the safety and reliability of his threatened bank he would not have been able to manage it.

You can believe there was as much good-humour and merriment at the wedding breakfast in Castle Road, Kentish Town, N.W., as would be found at a reception by a bride's mother in Queen's Gate, Kensington, W. You can take it that young Chapman, with the ends of small moustaches stiffened with soap, two pimples on the forehead, a necktie rucking up at the back of the neck, and a restless habit of shifting the cruet-stand that brought down upon his hand a reproving slap from his bride—that young Chapman, sitting there on a chair obviously lent by a bedroom, and nervously hoping there would be no speeches, nervously hoping, also, that the speech he had prepared would not be wasted; he, I say, was as honest and clean-minded and as determined to be a good husband as any six-foot-two bridegroom just married at St. Margaret's, Westminster, with a full choral service,



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and fellow-officers lining the aisle. You are requested to give credence to the statement that the shining-faced bride, sipping at a purple-coloured wine glass that invested the one-and-twopenny claret with age and bouquet and soundness, felt as triumphant in having secured her Clearing House clerk as any young woman who, in the company of a mother, chases big game through continents, and captures a lion. As for the chief bridesmaid, knowing her as you do, you will understand that, with a handkerchief spread over the lap of a skirt that would come in very well for Sundays, she enjoyed herself and managed others; telling Mrs. Enefer to sit still; taking the duty of changing plates; pretending to be an elderly retainer of the family with a slight infirmity of gait; resuming immediately afterwards the character of a refined guest. Accepted chaff from the uncle, who declared she had missed all her best chances, and was now an old and a neglected maid; induced Arthur Lord to show politeness to the second bridesmaid, and listened to the vivacious aunt when no one else gave attention. The chief bridesmaid in these circumstances had as good cause for self-satisfaction as any girl whose costume has entailed upon Madame Kleeberg, of Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square, three visits to Paris and days and nights of deep thinking. An attentive knight sat beside her, ready to minister to, and, indeed, anticipate every want; to eat her crusts, to pass the salt-cellar (but for an affrighted shriek of protest he would have helped her to the contents), and him she would not have changed for the finest and noblest figure in the

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world's history. And if breakfast were not at its close, with the guests saying in reply to Mrs. Enefer's hospitable pressure—

"No more for me, thanks."

"I'm just about full up, thank you."

"Couldn't eat another morsel if you paid me to."

"I'd like to make a hog of myself, but I daren't!"

And if the uncle were not consulting notes on the back of an envelope through his glasses and moving lips in silent rehearsal, there would be temptation to point out the obvious, and to remark that only to those on whom luxury calls infrequently does luxury ever call.

"Well, you know," said the uncle, edging back his chair and rising, "it's got to be done, and the less said the better. What are we here for? That's the question we've got to ask ourselves."

Aunt Bertha murmured "Ah!" and shook her head mournfully at a pine apple.

"Are we here for a vestry meeting? Are we here to hold an inquest? Are we here to break the bank at Monte Carlo?" The strained attention of the others was not broken by this neat quotation from a popular song. "What are we here for?"

"A wedding," said Winnie.

"That brings me," the uncle announced, slightly disturbed at being forced to accelerate speed, "to the very heart, so to speak, of the question. We are, as my young friend here remarks with a certain amount of truth——" Winnie flashed a look at him. "With perfect truth, we are here for a wedding. Now it

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occurred to me whilst I was sitting at this table—and a better meal I never wish to see or to partake of; if you'd come to my hotel we should have charged you half a guinea a head and not treated you nearly so well."

The guests applauded and nodded to Mrs. Enefer; Mrs. Enefer gave a tremor of gratification at this praise from Sir Hubert, and stroked the tablecloth rapidly.

"Whilst I've been sitting at this table it has occurred to me that married life's very much like a table d'hôte dinner, whereas a single life is very much like dining à la carte. In one it's all set out for you, and in the other——"

The uncle stopped, and gazed at a picture on the wall representing Queen Victoria in the act of giving a Bible to a negro chief. The others remarked, "Hear, hear!" Arthur Lord said, after a pause of dreadful silence, "Try back, sir." The uncle, displeased with his metaphor, took up the envelope, studied his notes.

"Well?" ejaculated the aunt impatiently.

"The word isn't dine," he cried, suddenly illuminated, "it's tune. I've got such a clumsy fist; can't make out my own writing. Tune is the word. What I intended to say was that marriage is like two young people sitting down to play a duet on the pianoforte, and —I don't profess to know anything about music, beyond twanging a bit on the Jew's harp when I was a bit of a boy—but I take it that in a duet, what you've got to do is to watch each other and show consideration and keep together, and for the

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high notes not to go rushing off, and leave the bass ones to come on after. As I say, I don't profess to know much about the matter, but I hope I haven't hurt anyone's feelings, and I beg to propose the health of the bride and bridegroom. May they never encounter a shadow or meet a sorrow, and may their troubles be only little ones!"

Applause with fruit knives.

"Fire away!" whispered the bride, with a jerk of the elbow.

"Perhaps you'd rather," said Mr. Chapman resentfully.

"Do it a lot better than you, if I cared to."

"Do it then."

"Children!" said Mrs. Enefer impressively.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Chapman, speaking with great rapidity. "I can assure you, whether you believe it or not, it's been a considerable pleasure to be here to-day, and to listen to my friend's kind remarks about me, I'm afraid his kind remarks were too flattering, but in regard to his kind remarks about my past career I can only say that my constant endeavour has been to give satisfaction to my superiors in Seymour Street, and at the same time cultivate friendship out of office hours, and concerning the new scheme started to-day I need scarcely tell you that if it doesn't succeed it won't be my fault. It won't be my fault. It won't be my fault. I think that's about all." He found himself arrested midway on his return to the chair by a sharp rejoinder. "It is suggested to me by Miss Enefer——"

Chorus of correction.

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"Beg pardon, my mistake; should have said Mrs. Chapman."

Cheers.

"That I ought to thank you all for the handsome and useful presents you've kindly given us, and especially to thank her uncle for his generous cheque. It will be my duty to see that it is laid out in a proper and a right and a satisfactory manner."

"Oh, will it?" remarked the new Mrs. Chapman audibly.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Arthur Lord, rising, "I shall not detain you more than a few minutes."

"Sit down," ordered Winnie.

"But I've prepared."

"Sit down," she repeated, "when I tell you. We've had enough speech-making. Let's push our chairs back and talk."

The uncle and the bridegroom went about the room, accepting compliments on their orations, and protesting modestly they had not said one-half they intended to say, regretting that they had not foreseen the possibility of being called upon to speak. The uncle claimed the company of Winnie for the afternoon drive, and she decided the other two in the carriage should be Mrs. Enefer and her son, an arrangement against which Arthur Lord protested. The second bridesmaid declared to Winnie, privately, that she had no desire to create jealousy or annoyance or ill-feeling, or anything like it; Winnie reassured her, and gave a word of advice that might one day come in usefully, to the effect that a sweetheart whom you wished to retain and preserve as a sweetheart should not have

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the chance of becoming wearied by one's company; it was worth while at times to shoo him away, although one might desire his presence. The second bridesmaid was astonished; she had always been under the impression the more often two people saw each other the closer became friendship. Winnie said the second bridesmaid had much to learn.

The gentlemen smoked cigars, and ladies leaned back as the two open carriages started for the afternoon drive. Castle Road contrived to smile upon them, whilst calculating the cost and estimating the ability of the parties to meet the expense. The autumn sun came out again in a most obliging manner, giving the bride an opportunity for unfurling a striped parasol, the gift of the bridegroom, and they drove along Kentish Town Road and Fortess Road, where Winnie stood up to have a good look at the shop that had once been R. O. Masters's; up Highgate Hill, where she and Arthur Lord exchanged an affectionate glance as the horses, beaten by the cable tramcars, went at walking pace by the Whittington Stone. In driving through High Street, and across the Heath, Mrs. Enefer and the uncle found themselves reminded of young days away back in the sixties, and Mrs. Enefer described the pork-pie hat and the shepherd's plaid costume which she had worn on a notable occasion.

"You had your share of good looks," said the uncle flatteringly, "then."

"I suppose," admitted Mrs. Enefer modestly, "I must have been presentable. Otherwise I shouldn't have been so much sought after."

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"You began to fill out a bit in the year seventy-seven."

"Seventy-eight. It was when your poor brother died."

"There's nothing like worry to keep anybody thin," said the uncle. "And worry's a good thing in other ways for some people."

"It's a mill," agreed the lady philosopher, "that we all have to go through. Generally speaking, we're a great deal better for it. Pain chastens folly. I worked those words once on a sampler."

"Few things give more enjoyment," declared the uncle, "than to look back on trouble when it's all over."

Moltke, never a chatterbox, and content to be at the side of a well-chosen companion, allowed Winnie to look out at the Heath without disturbing her reflections. The conversation of the two made her thoughtful, and switched thoughts from Miss Clements and Mr. Dray. The time would come, then, if she but continued to face difficulties, when they formed a not disagreeable memory; if she only went on fighting and gained the battle, the wounds she had received would, in course of time, heal. Wonderful to think that years could prove such an excellent remedy. The drawback was that one could not say when the fighting ended.

"Hands up for tea!" shouted the uncle.

Allotments were changed after they came out of the "Spaniards," and Arthur Lord took the place of young Enefer. Apparently he had been rehearsing in the earlier part of the drive, and now, as Mrs. Enefer and

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the uncle dozed perilously, awaking always when dislocation of the neck seemed certain, and at once going off again, he told Winnie that the proceedings of the day had made him think. He ventured to say, without much fear of opposition, that he was in the habit of considering matters more deeply than some, and certainly he could aver that he never took an important step without giving his whole mind to it. Some proof might, he hoped, be found in the fact that a country parcels office having tied itself into a knot, with error notes neglected, correspondence in arrears, abstracts not made up, and a cash drawer with contents of which few could make head or tail, he, Arthur Lord, had been chosen to go down on the morrow, attack chaos, and straighten out the tangle. He begged Winnie to recollect that the man thus specially honoured was the man who loved her, who cared little for second bridesmaids or any member of the sex other than Winnie, and that nothing could ever happen which would make him swerve from his devotion to her. Absolutely nothing. She listened happily.

"Your turn next," said Mrs. Enefer and the uncle. The carriage stopped near the Cobden statue, to allow her to step out, and she went to say good-bye to Mr. and Mrs. Chapman, and to counsel the aunt to stop singing. "Your turn next," they repeated as she came back.

"Hope so," replied Winnie cheerfully.

. . . . . .

Miss Meers in the hall the following afternoon ascended the folding steps, and in the fanlight adjusted

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the card; Winnie giving her a warning not to fall. The niece was returning soon from the boarding-school at Folkestone, and Miss Meers once more expressed a hope that she and Winnie would get on well together. A hansom drove up and stopped. Winnie flew out of the hall, and with one jump embraced the lady who had been assisted out of the cab.

"Miss Clements! Miss Clements! Mrs. Dray, I mean!" she cried. "Why, I dreamt about you last night, and I thought we were both of us abroad."

"We only arrived this morning." Mr. Dray paid the cabman, and the cabman said with emphasis, "Thank you, sir," in tones that meant rare satisfaction. "And my wife insisted on searching you out right away."

"You wouldn't come over to us," joined in the lady, "so we had to come to you."

"I have business on the Continent that will occupy me for quite a month or six weeks, and we return to some friends at Wandsworth Common," he explained. "I shall be out every day, and I don't want her to be alone. Especially just now. She must be cheered up at all costs. Therefore I want you to come along with us."

"But," she stammered, "we—we shan't be able to see a Sunday paper."

"That's the only drawback."

"Miss Meers," cried Winnie, her brain awhirl; "do you hear?"

"I should be the last person," said Miss Meers elaborately, "to stand in the way of anyone, but it's only fair to tell you at once that she simply cannot go."

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"Perhaps you'll ask us indoors," suggested Mr. Dray, "in order that we may talk the matter over. We leave for Paris this evening."

"What's that on the placard the boy's carrying, Winnie?" asked Miss Meers, turning to lead the way. "Your eyes are younger than mine."

"Hammersmith Burglary," read Winnie. "Death of the Victim."

"Poor thing," said Miss Meers sympathetically. "It's to be hoped she was prepared."

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## CHAPTER XVII

"A flag for those who go out to war,
A flag for those who return,
A flag for those who escape hell fire,
And a flag for those who burn!"

THE front door of the house in Westover Road, S.W., being unlocked and unbolted and unchained, Winnie, coming out, placed the mat in position and strolled to the gate to inhale, after weeks of foreign travel, the scent of London. A railway omnibus had brought the party from Victoria late the night before, and the long journey by train and train and boat and train tired them both so effectively that the driver on arriving had to awaken the passengers with gentle prodding by the butt end of his whip. Later Winnie found herself sharing a good room with the two fast-asleep servants, in one of whom she recognised an aforetime goggle-eyed maid of Fortess Road days; she shook her gently, but the girl only murmured, "In 'alf a moment, mem!" and went back to a slumber undisturbed for some reason by her own stertorous breathing. The grunts and choking and groans awakened Winnie at an early hour, and dressing and going downstairs, she made for herself a cup of tea, took one up to her travelling companion, and gave an answer to the dazed question



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of Mrs. Dray, explaining that the husband was not there because he had stayed in Paris on business. Urged her to take everything quietly, and to indulge in plenty of rest.

"Morning, London," she said, at the front gate. A smell in the air of fog that appeared to have taken possession of the Common. "Very glad to see you again, London. How you going to treat me this time, London? I think you're going to be amiable. You can be, you know, if you like; nobody more so."

A terrier ran up, prepared to be friendly. She addressed him in severe terms on the subject of staying out all night, and penitent tears came to his eyes. "Come along," she said, in more friendly tones, "let's have a run round and see what this part is like. It's new to me. Lead on, Macduff."

The terrier, after a space of indecision, went at a trot towards the road bordering the Common, looking back now and again to make certain that his services as guide were being appreciated. He went to the right and across the railway bridge, where Winnie said it was good to see once more a bumping, clattering, jolting English goods train, with trucks bearing names that could be understood at a glance. A constable came out of the mist, and said, "Ah, ma'am; taking the dog for a run?" she liked to be called ma'am, and it was excellent to feel that, if she were so minded, she could now talk to public officials in her own language, and without the necessity of eking out conversation by explanatory gesture.

"I've been away, Macduff," she remarked. The dog

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gave a politely astonished look. "Been running all over the map of Europe, and having the best time any girl ever had since the world first began. France, Switzerland, and a bit of Spain. Ever been to Spain, Macduff? If you get the chance, you go, just for the sake of saying you've been. And don't get frightened, as I did, because the men with the flat-brimmed hats look as though they used their razor for some other purpose than shaving; a murderer doesn't always carry words to that effect written across his face. Don't be led astray by appearances, Macduff."

The terrier endeavoured to intimate that he was taking mental notes.

"But up on the top of the hill at Granada, where the two hotels are, and you can look down upon the town, and by the side of the lake at a place called Neuchatel, and the river close to another place called Lyon, and the farthest end of Lake Geneva — Macduff, they're worth seeing. Been an education to me, it has, this travelling abroad; I am a different girl in many respects. Appears to me that going away broadens the mind, providing that you've got a mind to start with. All the same, it's jolly good to be back in London, and I'm not particularly keen on leaving it again, I tell you straight. I lost a watch Jim gave me the very moment I stepped on the quay at Boulogne. London's good enough for me. I can stand up for myself in London. Whatever happens here—— Do you notice, Macduff, how I aspirate my aitches? Takes your breath away, mind you, especially when you're walking. What's this big, ugly place supposed to be?"

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The dog, looking at the high walls to which she pointed, assumed the air of one who had long stored the information, but could not, for the moment, place his paw upon it. Workmen with bags and enamelled cans hurried across the Common, and a stall was being opened. The first silk hat came out of the fog and slackened speed to have a look at her.

"I'm going home!" she said to the dog. "You coming, or are you going to stay here?"

The eyes of the housemaid in Westover Road opened to their full extent as she rubbed a hand on an apron and gave a friendly grasp. This proved, she declared, the truth of a remark she had made more than once, which remark was that the world did not possess the extent that some attributed to it. Cross-examination by Winnie brought out the admission that she had been in seven places since Fortess Road, and Winnie asked her what steps she proposed to take when all the houses in London had been tested; the girl replied that obviously she would begin them afresh. And how was Winnie's young gentleman, and Winnie's soldier brother, and the Enefers, and everybody? Winnie replied that she could not give precise information, but she had sent a card from Pontarlier giving the Westover Road address, and the first post ought to bring news. It would certainly bring one communication.

"Come down!" said the girl hospitably, taking up her pail, "and be interduced. We've both been having a good look at your clothes upstairs. You are a swell, aren't you? Is it correct that the lady you've been with——"

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"Quite correct."

"Going to be a girl or a boy, I wonder?"

"Couldn't say," answered Winnie. "Let me fasten you up at the back."

"Cook," cried the girl at the door of the kitchen, "this is a very intimate old friend of mine, one that you must have often heard me speak about. Miss—Miss—— What is your other name, dear?"

"Winnie."

"I don't mean your Chrissen name; I mean the other one."

"'Winnie' is good enough to go on with."

Cook was pleased to make the acquaintance, and expressed a hope that the time spent by Winnie in the house would be marked by an absence of rows and of disagreeable incidents of every kind; for her part, she was one who would give in at any hour of the day rather than endure the risk of a dispute. That had always been her principle in whatever quarter of London she found herself. Winnie gave a word of commendation to the neighbourhood, saying that doubtless it looked brighter in the summer. What was the large building with the high walls not far away?

Cook replied that in this connection Winnie might consider herself fortunate and exceptionally favoured, for an execution was to take place there that very morning. Not that morning, corrected the housemaid, but the following morning. Cook protested against this interruption, the more so that she knew she had right on her side; the other asked whether cook meant to accuse her of telling an untruth, and, on cook replying promptly in the affirmative, the housemaid threatened

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to empty a pail of water in such a manner that it would give personal inconvenience. Winnie soothed the heated, apoplectic cook and comforted the housemaid, and cook said all she required was that the housemaid should behave herself as a lady; the housemaid said that she herself would make a similar appeal, if any likelihood existed of compliance. Winnie promised to buy a journal later and ascertain which of the two was correct; cook declared confidence in her own statement, and in preparing breakfast for the master gave a voluble account of the crime, but the other girl contradicted and amended the account with such pertinacity that the two were immediately embroiled in a new dispute, and Winnie left them to go upstairs and remind her travelling companion that a telegram had to be sent to Paris announcing safe arrival. The house was bestirring itself, and double knocks sounded along the road. She waited to catch the letters, saying "How's that, umpire?" as they fell into her hands. One was for her, good! From Arthur Lord, that was better. She felt in the mood for receiving a long, affectionate communication. Here was something that she had greatly missed during her trip abroad. A thick one from Paris, with two twenty-five centimes stamps; Mr. Dray must have gone back to the hotel and written it directly after seeing them off at the Gare du Nord. Fine to think that a man could care so much for his wife. She carried up breakfast.

"You can read this, Winnie," said the lady in bed; "all excepting the last page. The dear man says I am to give you a five-pound note."



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"Whatever for?" cried the girl.

"For looking after me."

"But it's not worth all that."

"He thinks it is," kissing the letter. "Have you any correspondence?"

"Shan't open mine till presently. Good news will always keep."

Cook had made up the dispute with her fellow-servant: it appeared the housemaid thought the discussion concerned a notable criminal called Neill, whilst cook intended to refer to a minor celebrity whose name neither could for the moment recollect; it would probably come to them later on, when they were trying to think of something else. Cook, restored to good-humour, had a suggestion to make. What was to hinder her or prevent Winnie from slipping out quietly together in the mist by the side door, and popping round to the prison, having a glance at the crowd that was certain to be gathered there, and dodging off back without a soul in the house knowing of their absence? Winnie urged she had already been out, and wanted breakfast; cook retorted that the previous expedition made good precedent for another, and gave bond to the effect that if Winnie accompanied her she should have for the first meal of the day two fresh eggs and two rashers. Winnie admitted the prospect tempted; for several weeks she had had to be satisfied with a cup of coffee and a roll and butter, but argued she had no great desire to be present at such a gruesome incident; furthermore, there would be nothing to be seen. Cook expressed regret that, owing to popular prejudice and general squeamishness, one no longer

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enjoyed the view that, so she had read, was afforded some generations before. Hubbub in the hall, with a bass voice calling to everybody to know what had become of gloves and the whereabouts of the hat-brush, proclaimed the fact that master was departing for the City.

"What time is this fascinating performance supposed to take place?"

Cook answered eagerly that the hour was nine to the minute.

"I'll go with you."

"That's a dear!" exclaimed cook.

The fog was rolling away from the Common, and the sun made determined efforts to follow up the advantage obtained. Black overcoats hastened across in the direction of the Junction, and the two girls had to be cautious where roads met in order to avoid collision with junior clerks racing against time. Cook used an apron as a respirator, but this did not prevent her from continuing to talk, and her muffled voice gave to the best of its ability a history of the crime about to be punished, and the cleverness shown in detecting the person. Winnie could only gather that a woman was arrested on some trifling charge, a woman who proved to be a man, and the subsequent efforts of the police were aided by something in his possession; a mere toy, in fact, that appeared to have been bought in Oxford Street by most respectable people, aristocratic in fact, and the tracing of the something's career had resulted in his appearance before a magistrate on the capital charge. Cook knew a plain-clothes gentleman attached to one of the

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divisions, and, through her apron, begged Winnie not to transmit the particulars to anyone, lest her friend should find himself enveloped in trouble. The terrier, looking for acquaintances on the outside of the crowd that had gathered at a respectful distance from the prison doors, discovered Winnie, and intimated pleasure at meeting her again.

"What business have you here, Macduff?" she asked, rubbing his head with the toe of her shoe. "About as much as anyone else has, I suppose. Sheer curiosity on your part. Where do you live?"

The dog protested against such a delicate question.

"You'll come to a bad end, too, if you're not careful. Stick close by me, or else you'll find yourself in trouble. There are some queer customers about."

"You never spoke a truer word," remarked cook. "Glance at that shortish old chap standing by himself over there by the tree. He's looking this way as though he knew us."

"That's my father," cried Winnie.

"Go along!" said cook incredulously.

She waved her hand to him over the heads of people behind her, and he responded, but he did not come across to her, although she beckoned again. Guessing that he had motives for reticence, and appreciating the difficulty of making way out of the crowd which now surrounded her, she contented herself by keeping him in view as she listened to the remarks of the crowd. One man, proud and haughty in the knowledge of possessing knowledge, had been acquainted with the individual in whose honour the bell was now tolling since boyhood, wherefore others

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near paid court to him, offering tobacco and matches, begging him to turn up the collar of his coat lest he should catch cold, and submitting, with deference, certain inquiries, to which the man replied sparingly, doling out information with a niggard hand, on the grounds that he had no desire to get himself mixed up in the affair in any shape or form whatsoever. You never knew who might be about, he said, eyeing them all suspiciously. He liked to be acquainted with people, he did, before he began to talk freely. Never one to make a fuss, he contended that trouble had often been created by opening the mouth too widely, but he could not recall an instance where it had been caused by keeping the mouth shut. The crowd, irritated by this unreasonable attitude, declared inability to credit that he and the man now about to be conducted from his cell had ever been at school together, but even this taunt failed to drive him into anything like generous speech, and he told them they were free, so far as he was concerned, to go to a future world, in the existence of which he, unlike many modern theological students, appeared to believe. The crowd turned attention to a woman who talked with such animation that her crape bonnet slipped to the back of her neck.

"Mind you," she said breathlessly, "I've never been through it personally; no one can say that; and if they did, I should have something to say to them. But I've got it all from printed books, and as I understand it there's two warders with him day and night, and on the morning when the affair is to take place, he's entitled to have whatever he likes for

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breakfast—mind you, this is only what I've read!—and he either makes a 'earty meal or he doesn't make a 'earty meal, according to whether he feels upset or not; and then in comes Billington, and in comes the Chaplain, and in comes the Sheriff, and in comes the Governor, and in comes the doctor, and goodness knows who all, and then the procession starts out and across the yard, the Chaplain reading close by his side, mind you, and saying——"

A few people cried "Bravo!" and the crowd moved back along the tree-bordered avenue to see a black flag which had gone up near a tower, well above the walls; the descriptive woman gave an ejaculation of annoyance at being thus anticipated. Cook remarking with a luxurious sigh that it was all over now, declared it had given her quite a thrill. The crowd loosened and escape seemed possible, but cook said cheerfully, "In for a penny, in for a pound," by which statement she intended to convey that she did not propose to hurry. They must, at any rate, interposed the descriptive woman, wait and see the notices fixed on the gate; that had to be done within a quarter of an hour, and constituted something which no self-respecting person should miss. She, for her part, felt that to go away without a look at these notices would be to omit one-half of the pleasure.

"Do stay," urged cook. "You'll have all the better appetite for food."

Someone in front had a cutting from a newspaper, and was graciously exhibiting it to those who asked in a proper manner, and cook, by prefacing her request with "I wonder whether you'd mind obliging my lady

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friend; she's been abroad and out of all these good things!" succeeded in obtaining a loan of it. The drawing was entitled "The Prisoner in Court. By our own artist," and Winnie, after inspecting it, handed it back, and said that no doubt it was a good likeness. She found her elbow touched.

"So you have condescended to speak," she remarked rallyingly. "You looked as though you were going to cut your daughter."

"There's been enough cutting," he said. She kissed him.

"Don't seem so very long ago," he went on, glancing over his shoulder in an apprehensive manner, "that you had to stand on tiptoe to do that. Everything seems to be chopping and changing." He sighed. "Kate wanted to come, but she's laid up. William's over there on the other side, and two of your aunts are about somewhere."

"Quite a gathering," she commented. She tried to think of a means of changing the five-pound note.

"Affair of this kind," he said, patting his chest and groaning, "brings people together. Doing well, my dear?"

"I'm sorry about Kate. You must give me the address; I'll see if I can give her a call." Cook gave a nudge. "I'm peckish," Winnie remarked. "I want my breakfast."

"He," with a jerk of the head towards the walls, "he won't never have no more breakfastes."

She looked at him full in the eyes and laughed.

"We're fencing," she said. "We're dodging each other, father, just as though we were mortal enemies.

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That comes of not seeing one another for such a long time."

"I can give a straightforward answer to a straightforward question," he replied, with feeble dignity. "If people trust me, I trust them. I've always tried," his voice broke into a whimper, "it's always been my constant endeavour to behave in such a way that everyone should have confidence in me. I've tried to bring up my children well."

She gave him her handkerchief and stroked his sleeve comfortingly.

"A man ought not to cry," she said.

"A man don't often have such a good excuse." He rubbed his eyes and placed the handkerchief in his pocket. "I seem reg'lar broken up, somehow. Reckon I'm just about done for. I'm on my last legs, that's what I'm on."

"You want looking after," said Winnie concernedly. "I know it's no use asking you again to give up the others, and trust yourself to me, but I'm going to do something for you. It'll all come right in the end." Folk around watched them curiously, and she took his arm and walked away with him.

"You do remind me, when you talk in that tone of voice, of her."

"Upon my word," she cried affectionately, "I could forgive you for everything after that. Am I taller than what she was?"

"Just a shade." She kissed him again. "If it isn't a rude question," he went on, "where's the nearest public-house? You know the neighbourhood, I expect a lot better than what I do. Poor Jim would have been

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able to tell us. A wide chap he was, but, like most of 'em, not wide enough. Never a one to talk too much, though; his bite was worse than his bark."

"Jim's all right."

"Hope so!" he said.

She arrested a stall in the avenue that was beginning to harness a horse for the purposes of transport, and standing there, gave her father permission to pour the coffee into the saucer. His hands trembled, and some of the coffee slopped on to the gravelled path. He suggested that as the crowd was now diminished, she should run around and find the rest of the family, but she declared at once that she had no inclination to meet them; the less they saw of each other the closer their friendship was likely to become. They could make their way back to Bermondsey without any assistance from her. He accepted a large, square block of cake, and with his mouth nearly full, gratified her with the news that he had come to the determination to leave Bermondsey. Bermondsey of to-day, it appeared, was no longer the Bermondsey of years ago. Religious folk invaded the place, knocking at the door every other minute, handing in cards, and making inquiries; it became impossible to call your soul your own. Some old chums, men on whom one was accustomed to rely, had deserted the ranks, and had gone over, and now at street corners might be found, of an evening, standing in the middle of a circle and close to a portable lamp, telling in a loud voice the particulars of events which occurred long before, events that had hitherto been shrouded in a decorous reticence. There was actually some talk of turning a West Lane public-house

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into a kind of mission-room, or some other form of nonsense.

"Tell you what," he said, with emphasis. "I've been considering for some time past the advisability of getting suddenly converted myself. And that's a positive fact."

Moreover, it appeared Bermondsey exhibited less sympathy than it should have given to a family visited by signal misfortune. People in Farncombe Street, who had hitherto said, "How are you?" now, on seeing one approach, became interested in the theatre posters; potmen, who had been on chatty terms until the hour for closing came, suggested transfer of patronage to some other house; a bookmaker's man, whose pitch was near the church in Jamaica Road, refused to undertake a small commission, after first affecting a severe attack of deafness. Winnie's father understood, but he could not swear to the truth of this, that the family had been preached about, and this, he hinted (in language which caused the keeper of the coffee-stall to ask whether anything else was required), constituted a distinct interference with the liberty of the subject. This was overstepping the mark. This was going just a little bit too far. If he had not expended so much recently on solicitors and what not, he would have felt greatly inclined to take action at law and obtain damages. The coffee-stall keeper rubbed his counter and announced that he was prepared for the return of the cups and saucers. They walked back through the avenue towards the prison and looked at the clock.

The space in front of the big wooden doors was almost deserted; at the side two white notices stared

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across. The sun had conquered the mist, and encouraged by this now endeavoured to defeat the morning chill; but one group standing near to the notices slapped shoulders and stamped feet, arguing the while excitedly. Winnie's father went across, and she followed; her mind could not decide on the course to pursue in regard to him; the dissatisfaction with old surroundings gave a favourable sign, and the absence of Kate made the moment appropriate for action. Under control he might improve, and, at any rate, she would have the satisfaction of knowing that she had done her best.

"And this," shrieked the group, in what appeared to be preconcerted unison, "is all your cursed fault!"

As her father received the blows Winnie ran forward, but she was not in time to catch him before he fell to the ground. Resting his head upon her arm she looked around and saw members of the group disappearing in various directions; she beckoned to a lad and begged him to run for a four-wheeler. Turned her gaze to the doors of the prison, hoping that a warder would come through the small gate to give assistance. The right-hand poster was headed "Certificate of Surgeon, 31 Vict. Cap. 24"; her eyes went swiftly along the lines.

"I, Richard Overton, the Surgeon of Her Majesty's Prison of Wandsworth, hereby certify that I this day examined the Body of James Garland, on whom Judgment of Death was this day executed in the said Prison; and that on examination I found that the said James Garland was dead."

The lad came running up triumphantly with the news that he had by wonderful luck secured a cab:

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it was coming along with all the dispatch that a horse just out of the stables could exercise.

"I'll give you a hand, Miss," said the lad. "Where shall I tell him to drive to?"

Winnie's thoughts scampered.

"Castle Road, Kentish Town Road."

"He'll charge you something for that."

"It's the only place I can think of," she answered despairingly.

In the four-wheeler she opened and read the letter from Arthur Lord; the while her father, with eyes still closed, sat a limp bundle on the opposite seat. She read the letter from Arthur Lord twice, and then, tearing it very carefully, dropped the small pieces from the open window.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

"Dear little baby one, wake from your sleep,
Wake up from slumber with eyes that can shine;
You, in your tiny cot,
Dearest, you're all I've got,
Help me to bear my lot,
Baby, oh baby that might have been mine!"

JUST as disaster is looked upon by Time as a red signal causing it to go slowly or come to a stop, so a clear line, with arms of semaphores at the amiable angle, induces Time to show what it can do in the way of beating records by putting on steam, making up for moments and days and years lost at earlier stages, and affording to folk opportunity, owing to the swift progress, of noting scarcely anything which they pass by on the way. Given a good straight piece of road, with no awkward corners, no facing points, no obstructions on the permanent way, no important junctions where the limit is twenty miles an hour, Time can travel at such an extraordinary rate that passengers are induced, on changing the almanac at the end of each section of the journey, to remark to one another in accents of reproach, "How Time does fly, to be sure!" And as the same passengers have said on other occasions in the same tone of voice, "Dear, dear! how slowly Time does go!" it must have appeared to Time that the task of pleasing some



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folk being one of considerable difficulty, the wise plan is to give no attention to complaints and to affect not to hear the remarks of querulous travellers.

Because of this, you must be presented to Mrs. Herbert, who will shake hands and inform you that she has no right to either of these titles; both having been conferred upon her in an informal way. The surname she inherited here a good many years ago; the prefix was given with her last step in the service. One of the jokes downstairs at Hyde Park Gardens comes when a new maid inquires at her first midday dinner, in a careful and discreet manner—

"You might tell me! What's become of Mr. H.?"

And this question, communicated at convenient opportunity, never fails to give considerable amusement, so that wise maids store it and bring it out and present it in the housekeeper's room, together with some less diverting report concerning those accidents which, according to an ambiguous proverb, happen in the best regulated families. The new maid, informed of the success of her unconscious flight of humour, generally said that Mrs. H. seemed an easy one to get on with; a remark met by a chorus from the more experienced, warning her not to be over-confident. The under-housemaid was in the habit, when Mrs. H. had, in her opinion, been sufficiently discussed, of saying, that where Mrs. H. took, she took, and where she did not take, she did not take; a decision that in print may perhaps appear to lack the note of finality which the speaking voice conveyed. Even those who, senior to Mrs. Herbert, had nevertheless been passed over in the year nineteen hundred and three, when the former house-

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keeper retired to Penshurst in order to concentrate attentions for the rest of her life on remedies for lumbago —even maids who occasionally had what they called ups-and-downs with the lady superior and could not always claim victory, admitted at the close of these debates that Mrs. H. was fond of children.

You have obtained introduction at a favourable moment, for Mrs. Herbert's own special and favourite nephew—whose name is Masters—being home from school, permission has been gained to give a party, and to give it in the housekeeper's room, thus investing it with novelty and making it appeal to youngsters who, in regard to parties, had arrived at a critical age. Earlier in the evening the room presented the appearance of exactitude and precision shown by the brightest models in furniture windows of Oxford Street, with, as Mrs. Chapman (bringing her two girls early because they threatened to make her life unbearable) flatteringly remarked, everything just so. Mrs. Chapman wished she could keep her best room in something like this spick-and-span condition.

"But when there are children in the family, Winnie, my dear—— You don't half realise what a trial they are.'

The guests had certainly done the best to convey to the housekeeper some idea of their powers. A certain frigidity perhaps existed during the first half-hour; the barriers of class were not immediately torn down, nor were the two easy-chairs at once utilised for stage management, and forced to represent, one Lord Kitchener's tent, the other a military hospital. Moreover, the lad had subjects to discuss with adults: Euclid and the easiest ways of overcoming that enemy, South

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Africa and its future. The Chapman girls took possession of another corner, and a third was taken by a haughty young woman of ten, who smoothed out her yellow sash, inspected her slippers, and, by an occasional glance at the others, intimated that satisfaction with herself was equal to contempt for them. Three youngsters, named Miss Lord, Master Lord, and Miss Rosie Lord, arrived, and commandeered the remaining corner; the hostess kissed them affectionately, and, begging them not to waste appetites on their respective forefingers, gave them, in a whisper, an idea of the great supper that would later on be provided.

"We haven't had nothing since breakfast," said Miss Rosie Lord shyly.

"You dears!"

"She's no business to mention it," interposed the elder girl, with severity, "and I shall tell about her when she gets home; but it's true all the same. Mother said you'd be sure to give us plenty to eat. Mother said we were to taste something of everything. Mother told us all about a wedding breakfast you and her went to once."

"I was first bridesmaid and she was second bridesmaid," remarked Mrs. Herbert.

"That's right," agreed Miss Lord. "Mother says she couldn't be a bridesmaid now, but that there's no earthly reason why you shouldn't."

"Now then," cried the hostess, clapping hands and turning to the others. "Games! Where's my boy? Come along, and give them a start! Can't remember any games? Well, if you can't, I can!"

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This happened three hours ago, and but for the pictures on the wall and the photograph of the hostess's mother on the mantelpiece, and the pianoforte, and perhaps the carpet (littered with tissue head-gear from crackers discarded owing to wear and tear and to the changes of fashion), but for these one might be tempted to say the room had changed. Certainly, the guests had undergone an alteration. Mrs. Chapman went downstairs in search of peace and quiet, and to enjoy a gossip, but the housekeeper remained, and the revolution that had affected the others made her a romping, excited person, slightly younger than the youngest of her guests. Now and again young Masters came across to her saying,

"Auntie dearest, don't you let them bother you too much."

And she replied cheerfully,

"I defy them to. Just let them try!"

Whereupon the screaming, excited youngsters made a joyful rush at her, surrounding her, buffeting her, pulling at her skirts, tugging at her hair, until the boy drew them off by a challenge to catch him. More than once a ring at the front door awed them into temporary silence, but they recovered quickly. Now a ring came and a knock followed it, and one of the maids came to announce that—a horrid silence and a dreadful fear possessing them as she hesitated before giving the name—that Miss Garland was called for.

"I do call that a shame!" declared the little girl with the yellow sash. "Just as I was beginning to enjoy myself, too. It's mother all over."



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"Military-looking person in a commissionaire's uniform," said the maid.

"Bert!" cried the housekeeper, going out to meet him.

"Left the hotel half an hour ago," explained a deep voice, "and come straight here for my little offspring. How are you, Winnie? You're looking first-class. How's the kid behaved herself? If the talking her mother's given to her has been any use, she ought to be all right."

"She's perfect. They are all of them perfect. Come in and have something. Something to keep out the cold."

"Must be the leastest possible drop," contended Bert. "I find I can very nearly do without it. Besides, I have to set an example to the wife."

The presence of a new adult gave grim foreshadowing of the end, but young Masters knew him well, and engaged his offices as umpire to decide on a question of military tactics, whereon he and the Lord boy held different opinions. Young Masters also engaged him on the subject of the Punic wars, in regard to which Mr. Garland felt less qualified to decide. They had all resumed their extraordinary volume of tone when another ring came, and the young Lords held breath and listened, and would have turned pale if the scarlet flush of their countenances had permitted.

"Mother!" they ejaculated regretfully.

Mrs. Lord flatly refused to believe for a single, solitary moment that her three children had shown the excellence of deportment credited to them. She knew them too well. She had suffered too much from them. She was

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aware how they behaved directly they were away from her. She could see them, so soon as her back was turned, carrying on more like three young savages than civilised beings. She had often said to Arthur, and she said it now again, and this time she would keep her word, that never should they accept another invitation. And see how tired young Rosie looked; why, it was as much as the child could do to keep her eyes open. Whilst the baby girl affected a wakefulness which made her appear all eyes and two white socks, Mrs. Lord mentioned, in a tone intended to be confidential, that she had not yet told the little dear, and of course it would be years and years ere it would be possible to tell her, but some day she would certainly have to be told, that if it had not been for Winnie and Winnie's care and Winnie's attention at a very early moment, Rosie's career would have been so brief as to be hardly worth mentioning. And all at a time when Mrs. Lord herself—— The lady, hushed down by Mrs. Chapman (returned from the kitchen, warm with conversation), and reminded that children had ears, took up the more discreet subject of increasing domestic expenditure, and stationary wages on the railway. So far as Arthur could make it clear, it seemed to her that the company expected you to bring up children by the dozen and feed them and clothe them and boot them all on an income of thirty-two and six a week. It was ridiculous. Mrs. Lord had said before that it was ridiculous, and if, on leaving Hyde Park Gardens that night, she should by chance encounter one of the directors, she would not hesitate to tell him that it was ridiculous. News had come that in certain quarters—

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"I'm not going to mention names," trembling, "I wouldn't demean myself."

—In certain quarters it was being said that she, Mrs. Lord, was not a good manager. To this charge the talkative lady had two answers. First, that she was most certainly an excellent manager, without peer or near approach in Tufnell Park, in proof of which she pointed out that the skirt she wore at that moment had been turned twice; second, that if the statement possessed truth, the obvious reason was that she had lost heart.

"Come and have a romp with the children," urged Winnie.

"Me?" cried Mrs. Lord amazedly. "Me romp? Oh, my gracious, whatever next?"

Young Masters being called over, took the lady from Winnie's hands and listened politely, presently obtaining refreshment and handing it to her with courtesy.

"There's good manners," said Mrs. Lord to her three children.

"That's something like," remarked Mrs. Chapman to her two children.

"Don't you wish you behaved like that?" asked Bert of his daughter.

"If only you could be induced to take a pattern," the trio began.

"Please," interposed Winnie urgently. "They've all been as good as gold." The youngsters sent grateful looks in her direction. She turned to young Masters. "My boy here is going to play just one more tune, you're all going to have just one more dance, and then

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off you go, the whole lot of you. Rosie," to the sleepy little girl, "I think you're engaged to me for this."

As Bert looked on, beating time and watching approvingly, and watching specially a yellow sash, the two ladies sat on the hearthrug to be clear of the whirling couples, and after toasting each other —"Here's wishing you, ma'am, all you wish yourself" —became confidential. How was it some were able to keep their figure and retain youth? Certainly, she was plumper than in the old days, but if you were not plump at thirty-three, it meant that Nature had decided otherwise. Some complained of being too thin, others that they were too stout; she had been fortunate enough to hit upon the happy medium. Of course, the berth was a good one; no gainsaying that. Certain amount of responsibility, perhaps, and, true, servants wanted looking after, but for the rest, it was a life that many a married woman might envy. Was it likely, by the bye, that she would ever——? Mrs. Chapman's brother, with three shops in North London, would give them all in exchange for the nerve to ask, albeit he well knew what the answer would be. If only they, Mrs. Chapman and Mrs. Lord, had their time to live over again!

"Ah!" they murmured expressively, with a commiserating shake of the head. And glanced again at the lady dancing with little Rosie.

But, honestly though, and to return to the subject (useless to bemoan the past), honestly, who would think, to look to her, that she had gone through all that trouble in the years gone by? Mrs. Lord had an incomplete possession of the facts, for the reason

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that she rarely cared to speak to Arthur on the subject; it only made him huffy: but Mrs. Chapman knew everything; she and her mother often chose Winnie as a subject for conversation, especially after Winnie had paid a visit to Castle Road. Mother went out very little now; mother said she would rather stay at home with her rheumatism than take it out for a walk. Mrs. Chapman, for the benefit of the other, gave a rapid sketch (Winnie announced to her baby partner that she was nearly done for, and young Masters at the pianoforte begged her over his shoulder to take care), a rapid sketch, starting from a Sunday evening in Junction Road, Holloway, and finishing with a Saturday afternoon outside London Bridge Station, when she and Winnie returned from Honor Oak and Winnie made an announcement to the rest of the mourning party.

"She set her back up," explained Mrs. Chapman, with vivacity, "and she told them why she had let them badger her hitherto, and why in future not so much as a brass farthing should they have. And I needn't tell you that your present husband, finding that the name of Garland went out of people's minds, begged and prayed of her to forgive and forget his letter, but she—— Well, her loss was your gain."

"Or the other way about," said Mrs. Lord.

The music stopped, and the young pianist forced Winnie to sit down and regain breath. He fetched the children's wraps, and Bert giving a strong hand to the two ladies on the hearthrug, the parents busied themselves.

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"Say good-bye nicely," they ordered, "or you'll have a shaking that you won't forget for a long, long time."

Bert lighted a cigar, and Mrs. Chapman and Mrs. Lord, having bustled the youngsters with many urgent words in favour of haste and the necessity for an action similar to flying, agreed it would be a shame to leave the remaining contents of wine-glasses, and now sipped deliberately on the grounds that in no other way could one properly differentiate between this and a claret which one obtained from the grocer's at tenpence a bottle, labelled with a Chateau that probably belonged to Spain. When the last drop had gone and the children came up in single file, then it became clear that the charge previously brought against little Rosie had some foundation. The last of the line, she, on being lifted up by Winnie for a hug, said absently,

"Goo'-night, mother dear."

To the extravagant diversion of the rest, who, as they went through the hall, where one of the maids held the door open, shouted amusedly and in imitation, with a fine disregard for the peace of Hyde Park Gardens,

"Goo'-night, mother dear."

Thus enveloping the child with a confusion that disappeared as Winnie ran down the steps, to present her with a box of chocolates which had been scarcely touched.

"You've allowed them to worry you," said the boy solicitously.

"They haven't bothered me in the least."

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"But I can see tears, auntie."

"Good-night, my dear boy," she interrupted, kissing him. "Sleep well, and don't forget to say your prayers."

The maid looked in at the housekeeper's room, and asked whether she should put it straight now or leave everything until the morning, and, receiving answer, said, "Very well, Mrs. Herbert!" and went. The housekeeper gazed at the tissue hats upon the carpet and at all the comic disorder, and, putting a hand to her head, found she was still wearing a cracker's idea of a crown. She touched with her lips the photograph on the mantelpiece. Sound of the youngsters' ironical cry seemed to remain in the room. The attentive maid came once more.

"Have you everything you want, Mrs. Herbert?"

"Everything, thank you," she answered, her face turned aside. "That is to say, nearly—nearly everything."

She stooped and picked up a pin from the carpet, for luck.

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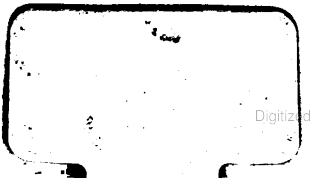

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